Dudley
CHRONICLE

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Staff being encouraged to live healthy lifestyles

CONCERN OVER 'OBESE' NURSES

Report by Richard Guttridge

OBESITY levels among nurses at a Dudley hospital need to be investigated, a top director has suggested.

Health bosses at Russells Hall Hospital have been advised to look at the issue of obesity among staff 'in a sensitive way'.

The comments were made by Richard Miner, a non-executive director at the Dudley Group NHS Trust, which runs Russells Hall, who pushed for action to ensure nurses were healthy.

It comes following research which found one in four nurses nationally were classed as obese.

Minutes of a board meeting in December recorded Mr Miner asking for health experts to keep on top of the issue.

A trust board report said: "Mr Miner, non-executive director, advised that he had raised the issue of obesity at a previous board and commented on the recently published research on obesity levels amongst nursing staff.

"He suggested that this may be something for the workforce committee to look at in a sensitive way.

"The Director of Human Resources confirmed that part of the new HR manager's portfolio is to look at health and wellbeing of staff."

Choices

A spokeswoman said hospital chiefs 'don't believe we have an obesity problem' but added staff are supported to 'make healthy choices'.

The spokeswoman said: "The trust proactively promotes healthy lifestyles and healthy eating among both our staff and patients.

"We support staff with a choice of healthy food options in the restaurants and by advertising the fresh fruit and veg stall at the entrance to Russells Hall Hospital. There is also a gym on site with reduced membership rates for staff alongside a number of other initiatives.

"We don't believe we have an obesity problem among nursing staff or any other particular staff group. However, we continue to support our staff to make healthy choices."

Research published last month found a quarter of NHS nurses are obese and that this could be contributing to high staff sickness levels and piling more pressure on the health service.

MOTHER GOOSE GONE ABSOLUTELY QUACKERS

From left, Matt Hickman as the goose, 'Dame' Chris Psaras and Krystin Wharton from Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Company in panto action

A THEATRE group is giving a traditional tale an upbeat twist in its first production of the new year.

The Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Group is delivering its own special take on the popular pantomime story of Mother Goose with lots of songs and dance – and some performances already look likely to sell out.

Joanne Gresswell, head of the production team, said: "It is a fun-filled family pantomime, something for everybody, from children to parents, to grandparents.

"We have been in rehearsal since September. We have got younger people who are in our chorus and they have all been very dedicated."

The theatre group was performing the show last weekend, when one of the performances at Brierley HIll Civic Hall was sold out, but will be back at the venue for further shows today (Thursday), tomorrow and Saturday. Panto fans will get to see good overcoming evil with the Fairy of Happiness taking on the evil Demon Discontent.

Joanne added: "The show does have a bit of a twist with the moral of it being that beauty is skin deep."

Tickets can be bought by calling 0845 6588095 or at the theatre group's www.bhmtc.co.uk website.

MURDER

Two charged over fatal stabbing of man

A 20-year-old man and a 17-year-old boy were due to appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court this week charged with murdering Jaskaran Kang, aged 24, in a flat above a shop in Dudley.

Reggie Salmon, of Stourbridge Road, Dudley, and the teenager from Newcastle-Under-Lyme – who cannot be named for legal reasons – have both been charged with murder

Mr Kang was found fatally stabbed at a flat above the Mini Mart on January 6.

Both defendants were remanded in custody.

TRIBUTES

Football supporters mourn 'Big Cyrille'

TRIBUTES have poured in following the death of Baggies legend Cyrille Regis, a much-loved figure for football fans across the Midlands and the UK.

The former Albion, Coventry, Villa and Wolves player died on Sunday, aged 59, after a heart attack. Famous names from football and entertainment paid tribute to 'Big Cyrille', who was a role model for young footballers.

● Legend – page 43

COURT

Megan case jury consider verdict

JURORS have been sent out to decide the fate of the defendant in the Megan Bills murder trial. Ashley Foster, 24, denies killing 17-year-old Megan, whose body was found in a clingfilm-wrapped wardrobe at a hostel in Highgate Road, Brierley Hill. The prosecution alleged Foster killed her in a sick sex game. He has pleaded not guilty.

● Last image of victim – page 3

INSIDE

IT'S STRICTLY FUN FOR ORE

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Bill quits UKIP role over leader's 'ego'

MEP Bill Etheridge

A BLACK Country MEP has quit UKIP's top table in protest at party leader Henry Bolton's refusal to stand down.

Bill Etheridge, who is also a Sedgley councillor, says he is no longer willing to serve Mr Bolton, who he has accused of dragging the party down with his 'egotistical ways'.

The Euro MP resigned from his position as party sports spokesman this week with immediate effect. He has also urged all UKIP members to contact the national executive committee (NEC) to call for Mr Bolton's removal.

The under-fire leader has been embroiled in controversy over his personal life in recent weeks, and on Monday announced he had split with his girlfriend, party activist Jo Marney, after she reportedly made racist remarks about Prince Harry's American fiancee Meghan Markle.

Mr Etheridge said the chaos surrounding Mr Bolton had dealt UKIP a savage blow and threatened to derail the party.

He stressed that his decision to quit was primarily related to Mr Bolton's 'lack of political nous'.

He said: "I am resigning as a spokesman for UKIP and focussing in pursuing Brexit through public meetings and rallies. I also urge members to contact the NEC to call for the removal of Henry Bolton before his ego finally drags the party down. Making sure we get a proper Brexit is the most important thing of all. UKIP cannot allow distractions like this to take our attention off the thing that is most important to our country."

If Mr Bolton is forced out, UKIP members will have to pick their fifth leader in just over 15 months.

Thousands of jobs at risk after Carillion crash

A SHOCKWAVE was sent through the business community and political world when on Monday morning Wolverhampton-based construction giant Carillion went into compulsory liquidation.

Last ditch efforts over the weekend, involving talks between the company, its lenders and the Government, failed to secure a rescue deal.

The result is that a company with its roots in the Black Country going back more than a century will now be broken up.

Less than a year after announcing revenues of over £5 billion the company has crashed. The fate of its 19.500-strong UK workforce, including around 400 at its city centre headquarters on the Ring Road St Marks in Wolverhampton, hangs in the balance.

Contracts

Many will be hoping they can be switched to new companies that take over the scores of contracts the company has for work on road, rail and Government departments. There are fears that thousands face probable redundancy.

It is unclear what the immediate impact will be on projects such as the Midland Metropolitan Hospital at Smethwick, which Carillion has been building for Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust.

Health chiefs have said the project is not at risk but the collapse of Carillion will almost certainly add to the year-long delays already affecting the work.

There was 'no comment' from scores of staff arriving for work at Carillion House in Wolverhampton today, but the shock on many faces was clear to some.

A few seemed close to tears at the news of the company's liquidation.

Carillion, which employs more than 40,000 worldwide, was created in 1999 out of the de-merger of the Tarmac Group.

● **For the latest information see www.expressandstar.com website.**

Museum to grow into 1940s-60s

An artist's impression of how the Gas Showroom will fit into the new town at the museum

A MASTERPLAN for the Black Country Living Museum aims to massively boost its visitor numbers while creating 60 new jobs and 35 apprenticeships.

This artist's impressions shows how the 1940s Gas Showroom, which was recently removed from West Bromwich, will look as part of the 1940s-60s town being created at the Tipton Road attraction as part of the Forging Ahead project.

Plans have now been officially submitted for the scheme, which would see the museum expand in size by a third. Upon completion, they are aiming to welcome 500,000 visitors a year – up from the current 300,000. The museum has already gained a higher profile as a location for filming TV dramas, including Birmingham gangster series Peaky Blinders.

A museum statement said: "This will allow us to tell the story of the Black Country up to the closure of the Baggeridge Coal Mine in 1968."

Holocaust survivor is guest speaker at service

A WOMAN who survived Nazi terror as a child during the 1930s and 40s,will be visiting Dudley to speak at the town's annual Holocaust Memorial Service.

In October 1938 Nazis rampaged through Eve Kugler's family home and the shop her father owned, destroying many of her family's possessions. The family, targeted because they were Jews, fled their home in Germany the following year and hid in France. When the Nazis invaded France, Eve and her sister Ruth managed to escape to life with foster parents in America. Many of her relatives died in the Nazis' murderous campaign against Jewish people.

Eve will be talking to hundreds of students and Dudley residents about her experiences at the commemoration event, organised by Dudley North MP Ian Austinand Dudley College Students' Union and with the support of the Holocaust Educational Trust.

Two students from local schools who visited Auschwitz – the concentration camp that was set up in Nazi-occupied Poland – as part of the trust's Lessons from Auschwitz programme will be taking part in the event. Religious leaders and the Mayor of Dudley Councillor Dave Tyler will also take part

The event is open to everyone at Dudley College's Broadway Campus at 12.30pm on January 26.

Sleeping on the streets for charity

A SLEEP-OUT in aid of one of the Mayor of Dudley's charities is being held next month.

Mayor Councillor Dave Tyler is appealing for others to join him on the sleep-out on February 9.

A number of sites have been earmarked, including the Savoy Centre in Netherton.

The mayor will be visiting all of the sites during the night. The event has been organised in conjunction with YMCA Open Door.

Councillor Tyler said: "This is such an important issue which affects lots of people. This event is about not only highlighting the plight of some of these people who find themselves on the streets, but also the excellent work of people at the YMCA Open Door project."

Nice comedy night

STOURBRIDGE Rugby Club is hosting a comedy evening tomorrow night (Friday), hosted by Dudley comedian Wayne Beese and headlined by Brummie comic Barbara Nice. The event from 7.30pm costs £20 including a two-course meal, call (01384) 395000 or 07989786913.

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Extra funds aim to ease the pressure on hospital

DUDLEY'S hospital trust has been given nearly £2 million of extra funding to help cope with winter pressures.

The investment in Russells Hall Hospital has been welcomed by Dudley South MP Mike Wood.

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust has been granted an additional £1,998,000 to help as flu and other winter problems have put health services under great pressure.

Mr Wood said the extra funding granted to Russells Hall was the equivalent of funding 46 full-time nurse salaries for the year.

The Conservative MP said: "This is excellent news for Russells Hall patients and Dudley South residents.

Critical

"We all want to know the NHS is there for us and our families whenever we need it, so I'm pleased the Government is giving the NHS extra support at this critical time of year, when cold weather and flu can increase the pressures on hard-working hospital staff and services."

He continued: "It's thanks to our strong economy that we can make this extra investment in the NHS.

"Polls show that the NHS is the institution that makes us most proud to be British and my party will always back and fund it."

More time to have say on transit site

A PUBLIC consultation launched to determine residents' views on the development of a temporary travellers' transit site has been extended.

Launched in December the consultation was due to conclude on January 19 – but Dudley Council have pushed the deadline back to the final day of the month.

But the move to bring in a three-year temporary transit site in the borough has received strong backlash from ward councillors who say the preferred site, Budden Road in Coseley, is contaminated land.

Coseley East ward councillor Susan Ridney said: "If we're not prepared to even put a football pitch on there how can we put caravans with babies and children on there"

Get ready to ramble

THE Dudley Ramblers are going on a moderate to difficult nine and half mile walk in Dorridge on Sunday. They will meet at Dudley Magistrates court at 8.30am. Dogs are not allowed on the walk.

Accident verdict on house fire victim

A TECHNICIAN died in a house fire in Dudley most likely caused by a discarded cigarette, an inquest heard.

Gary Gooding of Blackbrook Road, Netherton, died on December 1. An inquest held at Oldbury Coroners Court heard firefighters found the 42-year-old lying on the sofa when they smashed their way into the house.

The alarm was initially raised by a neighbour at about 6am that morning, who spotted the smoke and blackened windows.

With the help of another neighbour, he tried knocking on the doors and windows of the house to alert Mr Gooding. Firefighters arrived minutes later and broke into the property, battling the flames and administering CPR to Mr Gooding, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Fire investigation officer Leigh Richards said the blaze could have been caused by one of three things; discarded cigarettes, a lithium battery, or by dust self-heating in an orbital sander dust bag.

Mr Gooding was in the process of having his living room, where he was found dead, redecorated at the time.

Mr Richards said: "The main fire was in the floor area of the front lounge. The front room was being redecorated at the time, so there was a trace of white spirit found. But no petrol or other accelerant.

" Lots of cigarettes were found which had not been extinguished by bending the cigarette.

"All around the room there were cells that belonged to lithium battery packs too, as well as a cordless drill."

He went on to say an orbital sander was found, and there was the possibility that the dust inside the bag could have overheated and caught fire but that "there was no evidence of that".

The investigator concluded that the "most probable" cause of the fire was the "careless disposal" of cigarettes. Many cigarettes were found to have been placed into a carrier bag after use.

Chief coroner for the Black Country Zafar Siddique extended his deepest sympathies to the family of Mr Gooding, who attended the inquest, as he declared his death to be accidental.

Accused claims Megan's death was an accident

A MURDER suspect told the truth when he insisted in a letter to his mother that the death of a teenage girl while they had sex was an accident, a jury heard.

Miss Jane Bickerstaff QC, defending Ashley Foster, told Wolverhampton Crown Court that he was contemplating suicide when he penned the note after his arrest following the discovery of the body of 17-year-old Megan Bills.

Her decomposing body was found in a cling-film wrapped wardrobe in his room at a hostel for former prisoners in Highgate Road, Brierley Hill.

The lawyer said: "It is likely to be truthful. He was clearing his conscience thinking he would never see his mother again."

Foster, aged 24, had been freed from jail three days earlier and had met Megan for the first time hours before they had sex on Easter Sunday last year, the court heard. He insisted in the letter: "She tells me she likes to be strangled so I obliged... she loved it....but then as I released her, her eyes closed." He maintained: " I didn't intend it to end like this. I didn't mean it."

Consensual

Miss Bickerstaff continued in her summing up: "It was consensual sex. Why on earth would he want to kill or harm her? This was two young people experimenting.

"She was a young woman living quite a dangerous lifestyle. The defendant asked if he could strangle her and she agreed. He was lost in his own sexual pleasure and it was only when he stopped that he realised something had gone disastrously wrong."

Mr Crispin Aylett QC, prosecuting, told the jury: "Foster has provided you with nothing more than lies, self pity and cowardice. The letter to his mother is not a truthful account but he does not have a better one. The truth is he murdered her.

"He was playing out his sexual fantasy and strangling her was part of that. He could have released his hold any time but just kept the pressure on until he had finished."

Megan's body had been hidden in the wardrobe for almost three weeks before it was discovered by hostel staff on May 4.

The jury were considering their verdict.

Megan Bills talking with Ashley Foster, the man accused of her murder at the hostel in Brierley Hill

Megan first met Foster a few hours before she died

The last known image of Megan before she was killed

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Mayor opens new charity café

THE Mayor of Dudley has toasted the opening of a new charity café in Stourbridge.

Councillor Dave Tyler officially opened the Dudley Mind Café, Food for Thought, in Victoria Street, Stourbridge. Dudley Mind is one of the mayor's chosen charities for the year.

He toured the facility, which offers refreshments and provides space for meetings and courses.

The borough's first citizen also chatted to staff about the charity's work.

Councillor Tyler said: "I urge everyone to pop along and enjoy some of the things they offer."

Minibus funding scheme for Beacon

THE Beacon Centre for the Blind in Sedgley is set to benefit from a unique approach to funding a specialist minibus which is being launched in the UK for the first time.

MEGMOB, based in Harborne, will use advertising to fund a new disabled access vehicle for the sight loss charity.

A total of 80 firms will be allowed to sign up to the project, which will see them pay for advertising space on the side of the vehicle and show their support for the Beacon Centre and its work with visually impaired people

Manford gets in a muddle on tour

ONE of the nation's most popular comedians and is to bring his new tour to Dudley.

Mancunian funnyman Jason Manford will look to get the Black Country laughing when he brings his latest tour Muddle Class to Dudley Town Hall on April 27.

The 36-year-old comic is set to deliver a new set of material in a show that will explore his confusion at becoming 'middle class'.

Tickets to the event, which starts at 7.30pm, cost £30.80 and can be booked on (01384) 812812.

£600 is raised at pub to help two charities

A SEDGLEY pub has raised more than £600 from donations from customers over the festive season.

Staff at popular real ale venue The Beacon Hotel in Bilston Street have decided that the £500 raised should go to West Mercia Search and Rescue. The group is run by volunteers, to find out more see westmerciasar.org.uk website.

The remaining £115.50 is being donated to the Brain Tumour Charity.

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Hobson's Choice actors sought

AN amateur dramatic group is on the look out for actors for its next production. Wombourne Players also needs assistance with props for its production of the classic comedy Hobson's Choice by Harold Brighouse. The play is being staged in Wombourne Community Centre from May 16 to 19.

Director Richard Corser said: "We are short of three male actors for roles in the play – a foreman bootmaker ideally age range 40 to 60 and two younger actors."

Anyone interested in acting should e-mail info@wombourneplayers.org.uk or they can 'like' the Facebook page and message the group directly.

England stars back good cause

ENGLAND stars Daniel Sturridge and Rio Ferdinand backed a charity event in memory of a promising student who died in a crash on the M6.

More than £2,000 was raised at an event at Villa Park recently for the D.E.M.I Trust, set up by family members of Demi Nicholson, aged 21, who was killed on the M6 near Wednesbury last year.

Liverpool and England striker Daniel Sturridge, who is from Birmingham, sent a Liverpool shirt, while his family members attended. A champagne three-course meal for two was also donated by the restaurant of Rio Ferdinand, formerly of Man Utd.

College launches training scheme

A NEW management training scheme for graduates has been launched by City of Wolverhampton College.

The in-house graduate programme is aimed at young people who want to work in the further education sector in a management, leadership or teaching role. Applications must be received by Monday, February 5.

For more information or to apply for the graduate scheme go to www.wolvcoll.ac.uk/graduate-programme/ or call 01902 836000.

Drag queen TV star in one-woman show

A DRAG queen is set to bring her one-woman show to Birmingham. D.J. Pierce, better known by stage name Shangela, competed on season two of RuPaul's Drag Race but was sadly the first queen to be eliminated.

The star was brought back for season three to compete alongside the likes of Raja, Yara Sophia, Alexis Mateo and Manila Luzon. Shangela appears at the Glee Club on April 10.

Storage plan at former steel site

A FORMER landmark industrial site near Merry Hill shopping centre could be demolished to make way for a storage base.

The Sun Works plant would be taken over by the self-storage company Safestore Holdings to create units to rent for individuals and companies. The site has been derelict since steel firm Bird Stevens went into administration in March 2016.

There are a total of 16 buildings on site that were used for the manufacture and fabrication of metalwork together with materials storage, loading areas and car parking.

Councillor Jackie Cowell, who represents the Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood wards, said that she would welcome something 'constructive' being done with the site.

"I have seen a document put forward for the plans, which is good because it has been a considerable amount of time that the site has stood empty now.

"Derelict buildings and sites like this do not much for the environment or the local businesses and if it can be turned to better use instead of sitting there then that is something we would welcome.

"It may also bring more people to the area, which is a plus. We will see how it goes at committee, but it seems to be a constructive idea."

The plant was built on Sun Street in 1913. The company operated traditional metal manufacturing processes including press work, welding, galvanising, fabrication and tube forming.

Plans were registered with Dudley Council on January 3. A decision is expected soon.

Black Country car cruise ban extended until 2021

By David Cosgrove

AN INJUNCTION banning car cruising in the Black Country has been extended for a further three years by the High Court.

The court order stops people from taking part in a car cruise anywhere within Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall – or promoting, organising or publicising any such event in those areas.

Since it was introduced in 2015, 17 people have been convicted of breaching the injunction, either by taking part in or organising a car cruise, and have received suspended prison sentences, been fined up to £1,000 and ordered to pay court costs.

The four Black Country boroughs, led by Wolverhampton Council and West Midlands Police, successfully sought a continuation of the injunction until February 1, 2021, at the Birmingham District Registry of the High Court yesterday.

His Honour Judge McKenna, sitting as a High Court judge, said: "The measures are reasonable and proportionate and I am content to extend the order for another three years."

Dangerous

Councillor Paul Sweet, Wolverhampton Council's cabinet member for health and wellbeing, said: "Car cruising is noisy, dangerous and illegal, causing damage to property and posing a risk of injury – or worse – to participants and the general public alike. It also takes up a lot of valuable time for our hard-pressed emergency services.

"Since its introduction in 2015, the injunction has helped to dramatically reduce the menace of car cruising across the Black Country, eliminating it altogether in certain areas. However, the problem has not been entirely eradicated."

Museum focus on photo competition

Sheila Chamberlain-Hyett and Edward Miller provide photographic inspiration at the Black Country Living Museum

GRAB a camera and get snappy as the Black Country Living Museum is set to stage a special photography exhibition later this year.

It comes as part of the attraction's 40th anniversary celebrations. It is inviting people to submit four new and archive photographs on the theme of Reclaiming Our Industrial Might.

The deadline for entries is February 23 and a selection of the images will be on display at the museum in Tipton Road for its Industrial Might weekend on May 19 and 20.

Submissions need to feature the Black Country's industrial heritage including forges, boilers collieries and factories. Portraits, architectural shots and present day street photographs are also welcomed, but images taken at the museum cannot be included. Digital photographs can also be submitted.

People whose photos are chosen will be contacted within eight weeks of the closing date.

During the Industrial Might weekend, visitors can discover the awe-inspiring industry of the Black Country and it will be jam-packed with live demonstrations and fun for all ages. To submit photographs go to reclaimphotographyfestival.org

Loose nut is costly error for garage after blaze

AN MOT centre and its directors have been handed a court bill of almost £5,000 after a vehicle that had been serviced caught fire on an M42 slip road.

Jennings MOT Centre Ltd, in Simms Lane, Netherton, carried out a service to the rear brakes and bearings of the Fiat 130 motorhome.

The vehicle was being driven on the M42 when the driver experienced problems and stopped on the slip road. Minutes later the rear left wheel became detached from the vehicle and the motorhome caught fire.

The fire service was called and had to partially close the motorway. They concluded that the cause of the fire was friction and heat build-up in the wheel or brakes.

The motorhome was examined by an independent vehicle examiner who found that the left rear wheel hub nut hadn't been secured properly, causing the bearing to become loose and overheat, causing the fire and the loss of the wheel, 'a result of poor workmanship by the repairer'.

Trading standards team led the prosecution at Dudley Magistrates. The company and its two directors, Taseem Farooq and Waqar Farooq pleaded guilty to offences under the Road Traffic Act 1988 and The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.

The company was fined a total of £2,000 and ordered to pay £520 costs and a £220 victim surcharge. The two directors were fined £500 each, and both were ordered to pay £520 costs and £50 victim surcharge. Magistrates said that the failure could have had far more serious consequences.

Four in court over car fall death

FOUR people have appeared in court over the death of a woman who fell from the bonnet of a car in a supermarket car park. Ellie Underhill, 20, died a week after suffering head injuries at Tesco Extra, on Birmingham Road, Dudley, on Boxing Day 2016.

Luke Hickman, 19, of Wassell Road, Wollescote, is accused of unlawfully killing her. He appeared before magistrates in Walsall last week charged with manslaughter.

Ross Bingham, 20, of Hagley Road, Edgbaston; Elly Phillips, 19, of Seymour Road, Wollescote; and Hana Edwards, 18, of Grove Road, Wollescote; are charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. No pleas have been entered. They were given bail. They must appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court on February 7.

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Public split over new homes for Green Belt

A NEW poll has found support for new housing being built in the West Midlands' Green Belt.

With Birmingham needing to deliver more than 80,000 new homes by 2031, and with both the Government and local authorities facing increasing pressure to release land for new homes, almost one in two people would support such development.

The survey of 1,000 people, conducted by independent national polling company Censuswide and commissioned by Snapdragon Consulting, saw 49.1 per cent of respondents in the West Midlands saying they would support building on Green Belt land to meet demand for new homes, compared to 52.3 per cent nationally.

The figure grew to 74.1 per cent when people were asked if they would support development on a previously developed Green Belt site, which could include agricultural buildings, warehouses, car parking or airstrips.

Land designated as Green Belt is currently granted protection, from new development to prevent urban sprawl around cities across the country. With large swathes of land around Birmingham designated as Green Belt, much of the region is currently out of bounds for developers. Support for Green Belt development is strongest amongst 16 to 24-year-olds, who are struggling with affordability and availability of housing.

Dementia friendly cinema proposed

A COMMUNITY group is to discuss the creation of a 'dementia-friendly' cinema.

The East Coseley Big Local group will join forces with the Black Country Touring and the Alzheimer's Society to consider the pros and cons of a community cinema designed for people with dementia in Coseley on Monday, from 10am to 1pm at The Apple Tree Inn in Bilston.

A previously meeting was postponed due to snow.

According to the East Coseley Big Local group a dementia-friendly cinema would provide a safe and welcoming environment for people, families and carers living with dementia. Visit www.eastcoseleybiglocal.net/lets-start-a-dementia-cinema-in-coseley

Kitchen rescue

AN ELDERLY man was led to safety by firefighters when smoke filled his kitchen after cooking was left unattended. The incident happened at The Promenade, Brierley Hill, on January 10 just after 5.30pm.

Ironmaster's old home to be demolished

Hatherton Lodge will be bulldozed

THE former home of a man credited with bringing chain-making to the West Midlands will be bulldozed to make way for new homes – despite calls from heritage campaigners to save the property in Cradley.

Hatherton Lodge, once owned by Noah Hingley, will be pulled down to make way for seven new houses following a decision by Dudley Council's planning committee. It comes despite 97 objections made against the plans. Campaigners who fought to save the building near Drews Holloway said the decision was disappointing.

Dudley Council said all options had been explored to try to save the building, which is now in a derelict state.

Mr Hingley, who lived in the house during the 19th century, owned Netherton-based ironworks N Hingley & Sons which made the anchor for the Titanic.

At the planning meeting, chairman Councillor Andrea Goddard initially recommended a site visit but committee members felt it would take too much time and money to bring the house back from its current poor state. It has been empty for years.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "It is a great shame the house has been allowed to deteriorate."

Council officer Helen Yorke said: "Every single avenue has been explored to save the property."

The committee voted against a site visit before voting in favour of demolition.

James Warwick, who founded Facebook group Save Hatherton Lodge which had around 470 members, thanked those people for their support and said: "The decision is disappointing."

Mother to marry jailed American murderer

A 33-year-old mother from Stourbridge who fell in love with her American prison pen pal is set to marry him – despite the fact that he may never be released.

Emma Pickett began writing to Justin Erskine last year after coming across his profile online and says he is the love of her life.

Erskine is serving a life sentence for first-degree murder without chance of parole. He was jailed for his role in the June 2006 killing of two men.

Erskine was found guilty of first-degree murder after being accused of giving a butterfly knife to a friend, who committed the killings. He then helped to bury the bodies in Maryland, according to reports.

Ms Pickett said she initially struck up a friendship with the murderer, who is being held in Delaware, as the pair bonded over poetry, books and music. But she soon found herself falling for the convicted criminal and the pair declared their love for another within weeks. She now plans to marry the lifer, aged 30.

Children

The mother of three hopes to move to the States along with her young children, who she says have a great relationship with the convict, who has no children himself.

She first flew out to visit him in September, when the couple shared their first kiss.

Care home worker Emma – who has been married once before – is in close contact with Erskine's family. The couple hope to get married later this year.

She said: "Writing to a prisoner was something I had seen other people do. I had friends that had done it.

"There is a stigma attached to it. But it is not the case that everybody in prison is automatically a terrible person.

"I was looking through profiles but nobody was really jumping out to me. But then I came across Justin's page. He liked poetry and books and I liked the look of him.

"I wrote my first letter in April 2017. I wasn't really expecting to hear back from him. But he wrote back and it turned out we had so much in common.

Thousands of miles and prison walls didn't stop romance between Emma Pickett and Justin Erskine

"By the beginning of July we both started to realise that there was a bit more between us.

"We actually had both written a letter to say we loved the other and they were both in the post at the same time.

"We spoke for the first time on the phone on July 16. I was so nervous. But as soon as I heard his voice all my anxieties disappeared. There is a sense of familiarity with him.

"Now we talk on the phone all the time. I have been over to visit him twice now. We kissed for the first time and it was so special. He exceeded my expectations and meeting him confirmed all my feelings. He is the love of my life and when he asked me to marry him, of course, I said yes."

Ms Pickett has now joined Erskine's family in attempting to fight his conviction, claiming he was coerced by others.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MP looks at work of homeless team

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin visited Dudley Council's Homelessness team to see the work they carry out and learn more about the 'No Second Night Out' policy, which means people sleeping rough are offered emergency accommodation and support.

Mr Austin said: "People in Dudley have been shocked at the increase of people sleeping rough in the town, so I spent a few hours with Dudley Council's Homelessness team hearing about their work to help."

People in need of urgent help if made homelessness can contact the Homelessness Prevention and Response team by calling 0300 555 2345.

Hedge your bets with rural craft

FOLK can learn a traditional country craft in Dudley next month.

Friends of Wrens Nest National Nature Reserve are organising a hedge-laying event at the beauty spot.

There will be tuition from the Dudley reserve's wardens on Saturday, February 20, from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

Places are limited on this one-day course and for the over-16s only.

Contact the wardens on 07854 539411 to reserve a place.

More than 20 people have taken part in previous years.

Have Faith in tribute to George

TICKETS for a George Michael tribute show at Dudley Town Hall have gone on sale. Faith – The George Michael Legacy will be at the venue on March 3 at 7.30pm.

It is billed as a musical journey through more than 30 years of hits, from Wham to the late singer's solo career and uses actual video footage from the George Michael 25 Live tour.

The audience can expect to hear songs such as Club Tropicana, I'm Your Man, Faith, Careless Whisper and Freedom. Tickets cost £21.50. To book call 01384 812812.

Richardsons in joint warehouse venture

DEVELOPERS the Richardson family have taken on two new industrial warehouse schemes.

Oldbury-based Richardsons, which developed the Merry Hill complex, has formed a joint venture with Warwickshire's St Francis Group. One of the projects is Velocity 42, a 20-acre site at Park Farm Industrial Estate, Redditch. The other is Cransley Park, a business park in Kettering. Work is expected to start this spring.

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Can I help you? Yes I'm being robbed . . .

FOR those of you who thought the thin blue line had been getting a little too thin for comfort lately, here's something to gladden the heart.

Police in Lancashire say that by the end of the year people could soon have their own virtual bobby in the home.

The gadgets will not only make regular announcements about crime-fighting operations – which I am sure will never become irritating – they will also allow people to report crimes via voice-activated technology. Which means they can employ fewer call-handlers. Yippee.

Have the brains behind this ever used a voice-activated service? My credit card provider has just switched to one for bill payments, and let's say the results have been mixed. A call that previously took a couple of minutes "press two to pay your bill, enter your debit card number" ended up taking a quarter of an hour and four separate calls, probably in part because I don't speak hologram fluently.

Can you imagine how this might work in an emergency?

"Help, I'm being robbed!"

"Hello Rob, how may I help you?"

"A robber has a knife to my throat!"

"Yes, Rob, your wife is allowed to vote. Say 'yes' if you would like another service, if not, say 'I am done'."

At this rate, we're all well and truly done.

❒❒❒

ALSO facing a shortage of personnel is the British Army, which has also reverted to, shall we say, unconventional means, to fill the gap.

It's strange, because it only seems like a couple of years ago that the Army was making thousands of experienced, battle-hardened soldiers redundant, closing down the Staffordshire Regiment.

Anyway, the corporate whizzkids have decided that the old "Be the Best" recruitment slogan was outdated and elitist. Can't discriminate against people who don't want to be the best, can we?

As a replacement, the Army has come up with some soppy online videos that look a bit like the opening credits for the Generation Game during Brucie's second stint, circa 1990. They encourage would-be recruits to talk about their feelings, and say it's all right to cry if you're upset.

Brilliant. So next time the Argentinians, Putin, Isis, or whoever our enemies are these days decide they want another war, and deploy a load of hard nuts to blow our heads off, we retaliate with a group of people in touch with their emotional side.

They'll probably use It Ain't Half Hot Mum as a training video.

Gear up and sort out these tyre-bursting roads

Theresa May – the recent reshuffle was underwhelming but made a point

Tony Blair – a number of words sprang to mind, 'clever' was never one of them

Keir Starmer – looking anxious following announcement of rapist release?

Drivers in a hole as planning falls short

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

I CANNOT recall such a vicious crop of tyre-bursting, wheel-bending, suspension-cracking potholes on our roads as we have now. It must have something to do with hard frosts followed by heavy rain, plus the fact that no-one in authority ever seems to expect such weather in a British winter, let alone plan for it.

OUR changing language. Yes, I know it's a real word but I'd never heard it before. The God-botherer on Thought for the Day (Radio 4) referred to the faith of those who believe the end of the world is nigh. It is called Apocalypticism. Now, there's a real denture tester.

A READER who believes Brexit will never happen writes: "Brexit is merely a bar-room drunk's xenophobic fantasy . . . Remainers will prevail because we have common sense, truth, peace, patriotism and the social good as our arguments." And humility. Don't forget the humility.

THE anti-Brexit movement, led by Lord Adonis, Gina Miller, Tony Blair and the others, is based on the unspoken, but heavily implied, belief that these people are much cleverer than the rest of us. I cannot speak for them all but I have interviewed Tony Blair several times. Although a number of words sprang to mind, "clever" was never one of them.

BY the end of this year, smacking children will probably be illegal in Wales and Scotland. This offers some interesting business opportunities on England's western and nothern borders. I foresee a string of cosy little franchises (Slippers-R-Us?) where Scots and Welsh parents can bring their errant offspring for a taste of traditional discipline and regale them with stories of how "we all got it in the old days and it never did me any harm."

MORE to the point, when slapping is banned across the UK, as it surely will be, what happens next? The approved alternatives to smacking, as preached by the great and good, are confining a child to its bedroom or confiscating its favourite toy. Or to put it another way, imprisonment without trial, and theft. One for the human-rights lawyers.

AFTER my recent item on prostate examinations, a reader tells me of a GP who uses two fingers, in case he needs a second opinion.

A COMEDIAN in the 1980s announced details of Margaret Thatcher's latest cabinet reshuffle. Apparently, Thatcher had moved the blue Wedgwood pot behind the little china dog. The recent reshuffle by Theresa May was just as underwhelming and didn't even have a punchline. But it did make the point, as May sacked middle-aged ministers for being "male, pale and stale," as the BBC put it, that it is perfectly possible in these enlightened times to be sacked for being the wrong gender, colour or age.

SOME of the victims of the black-cab rapist John Worboys are demanding that when he is freed from prison he should be excluded from London. And if the worst happened and Worboys struck again in the provinces, who would explain to the victims in Wales, Whitby or Wolverhampton that a rapist was unleashed in their midst to make London safer?

WHY was the normally cool Labour front-bencher Keir Starmer so agitated and anxious in his interview following the announcement that Worboys was due for release? Starmer's only involvement with the case is that at the time, nine years ago, he was Director of Public Prosecutions when it was decided to charge Worboys with only a dozen offences. His lawyers probably took the view that adding many more similar cases to the charge sheet would not result in a longer prison sentence. So it was a pragmatic, logical decision. The snag for Starmer is that in the intervening nine years sex offences against women have become centre-stage. Logic is not what it was. We now have a febrile culture in which a single ill-judged email or a wandering male hand 10 years ago is enough to end a political career. Starmer knows that he will survive the current scandal, so long as nothing more happens. But what if Worboys is released and offends again? In the present climate, illogical and unfair though it may seem, Keir Starmer could find his head on the block. No wonder he looked worried.

TALKING POINT

Weathering storm of American influence

POLITICIANS love to tell us that Britain has a special relationship with the United States – and it seems that includes the weather.

Avid watchers of weather forecasts will be well aware that storms these days are given human names, apparently to raise awareness so that people can take urgent action and batten down the hatches as severe winds and rain approach.

The Met Office, in conjunction with Ireland's Met Éireann, announced the storm names for the 2017-18 season in September, and already we've had Aileen, Brian, Caroline, Dylan and Eleanor.

In anticipation of a particularly bad season, a number of names have been chosen in alphabetical order. So far, so good, but a graphic on the Met Office website illustrates some glaring omissions in the naming process – which is where the American influence comes in.

Instead of using all 26 letters of the alphabet, Q, U, X, Y and Z have not been allocated a name. At first glance, it's easy to assume the Met Office had difficulty in choosing names for those five letters.

However, the actual reason they are not included is – and I quote the Met Office's small print – 'this ensures we are in line with the US National Hurricane Centre naming convention and will maintain consistency for official storm naming in the North Atlantic'.

So there we are. Our storm-naming system is at the mercy of American weather experts.

Maybe a campaign could be started to have those five lonely letters included after all. In true British spirit, the Talking Point team set about thinking up how to fill the gaps.

We came up with Quentin, Una, Xavier, Yul and Zach, and we'd like to think they are more sensible than some of the suggestions submitted to the Met Office.

How seriously could you take the news that Storm Gnasher was on the way? Or how about Baldrick, NastyBoy, Skylab, Stomp, Swoosh or Twizzle? Not surprisingly, the names of retailers such as B&Q and Asda were also excluded.

Looking back, the 2016-17 season saw five storms named, from Angus to Ewan. In the previous season, 11 were named, from Abigail to Katie.

Obviously, no-one can tell how many names will be needed this season – as few as possible, if we are lucky.

So despite the Americans taking over in this instance, perhaps we should be hoping that we don't get as far as those missing letters.

STEVE PARLETT

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Winter ban on non-emergency ops to help

THE hospital crisis this year is worse than last year which was worse than the year before, and so on.

To ease the problem all non-emergency operations have been cancelled.

That means that there are people that have geared themselves up and made arrangements for the operation date that will have to go through it all again at a later date.

This must also cause some disruption with the theatre staff and administration departments, but I'm sure most people would accept that is a price worth paying to help others who have urgent needs.

As this is a problem that is unlikely to get any better this time of the year – or any December/January in any year in the near future – could it not be possible for hospitals to keep December/January every year free of non-urgent operations by not making appointments?

Not only would this take some of the pressure off the system but everyone would know that there wouldn't be operations in that period.

Hospitals would have more time to plan the operations outside of those months, unlike now when they have to fit them in when they can and patients wouldn't be stressed out with cancelled appointments and then given short notice to attend rearranged dates.

KEITH DAY
Gornal Wood

Rotary Club thanks for donations

ON behalf of the Rotary Club of Sedgley & Wombourne, assisted by Wombourne 3rd Scouts Group, we would like to thank everyone who contributed so generously to our annual house-to-house collections during December.

Additionally, our sincere thanks goes to the patrons of Sainsbury's Wombourne, Ashwood Garden Centre and ASDA Sedgley, where we also had a static presence accompanied by Santa's sleigh.

We are delighted to report we raised a magnificent total of just over £6,746.

This wonderful achievement enables us to continue our important work of supporting the many charities with whom we continue to be associated. A breakdown shows £1,514 was donated in Sedgley, £2,104 in Wombourne with a further £3,128 at our static collections at Ashwoods Garden Centre, ASDA Sedgley and Sainsbury's.

M H KERRIDGE
Rotary Club of Sedgley & Wombourne President

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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Enough worries without charges

I DON'T think people rant about hospital parking charges. I haven't read any complaints about a reasonable fee being charged at all. I think many people are rightly annoyed by the rate of fees charged by some hospitals like Russells Hall, where you turn up for appointments, are invariably kept waiting for hours after the appointment time, knowing that the charges are approaching over £5 per visit.

If you're using a city car park you are there for a purpose, to use the facilities provided by that city for your own pleasure. If you're using a hospital car park , you either have a health problem or are visiting someone who has, in which case you already have a problem, why should this be added to by car parking fee worries?

CHRIS BAKER
Halesowen

Apology is not enough Mrs May

THERESA May seems to think an apology will cure all that's wrong with the NHS. Wrong again Mrs May, the NHS is now in critical condition after your Government's constant cuts and manipulation of figures.

We have frazzled staff, working at breaking point, elderly patients slumped in corridors without any means of keeping warm, or of being looked at. Stroke patients stuck in ambulances instead of seeing a doctor. We now have corridor treatment instead of A&E.

What a disgrace. You're even trying to blame the head of the NHS for the problems.

Resign now, we are all fed up with your pathetic excuses.

Our NHS staff are the best you could ask for but the Conservative Party are treating them like modern day slaves. God help us in 2020 if this shower is still in power – we will have pay as you go NHS.

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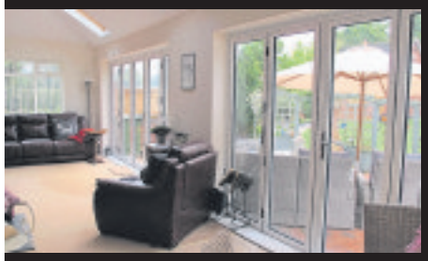

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Killer jailed for 21 years after bungled burglary

A 19-year-old who murdered a father-of-two during a bungled burglary has started at least 21 years behind bars.

Damilola Johnson and a 15-year-old, now aged 17, but who cannot be named, broke into the home of Simon Johnson to steal cannabis from the crop being grown at the house in Netherton.

They were both armed with knives picked up from the kitchen after entering the house in Cradley Road, which they knew was occupied, during the early hours of August 11 2016, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

They had filled several bin bags with leaves cut from the plants but were greedy for more and when searching for more items to steal went into the bedroom where Mr Johnson – no relation – was sleeping.

Woke

Damilola Johnson accidentally kicked the bed and woke 41-year-old Mr Johnson, who lived alone after an amicable split from his wife and children the previous summer.

There was a struggle during which the householder was knifed at least four times by Damilola Johnson with the most serious injuries being to his back and under an arm.

The attackers fled with some of the haul, leaving Mr Johnson to die on the upstairs landing where his body was later found. The pair later discarded their knives and stolen credit cards.

Johnson, of no fixed address, was told he must serve at least 21 years of a life sentence in custody before being considered for parole. He was convicted of murder and burglary after a trial.

The other defendant, who was found guilty of manslaughter by the jury, had admitted burglary and theft. He was given an extended sentence of ten years detention. He must serve at least two thirds of the term and can only be freed when it is considered safe to do so. He will then be monitored for thee years longer than usual.

Damilola Johnson – killer showed no remorse and is jailed for 21 years

Simon Johnson – victim was knifed at least four times at his Netherton home

The burglars had heard about the cannabis plants from friends who had been drinking in Mr Johnson's home.

The victim was said to have a friendly, trusting nature and had been warned by pals about inviting people he met at the pub back to his home.

Judge James Burbidge QC told them: "The psychological trauma suffered by the two young daughters of Mr Johnson is almost beyond comprehension."

Mr Johnson's widow Roz – the couple have daughters now aged 18 and 11 with – remained close to him despite living apart. She said: "They adored him."

Detective Inspector Warren Hines said: "He was brutally attacked in his own home by greedy, violent criminals and not one shred of remorse has been shown by either of the convicted youths."

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7.30pm Fitness Pilates
7.30pm Funky Hau2

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11.00 Fitness Pilates
5.45pm Yoga
6.30pm Sosa Dance Fitness
6.30pm Metafit
7.15pm Burlex
7.30pm Abs Box

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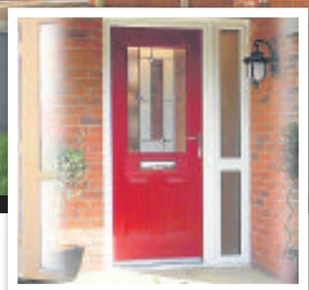

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Aphrodite Rising from the Waves sold for £84,000

Aphrodite glassware provides a beautiful moment for auctioneer

AN AUCTIONEER has described the sale of a rare glass plaque made in Stourbridge as the highlight of his career.

Will Farmer, director at Fieldings Auctioneers in Stourbridge, said he was left 'touched by the heaving crowds' at Saturday's sale of George Woodall's Aphrodite Rising from the Waves, which sold for £84,000.

Mr Farmer said: "It was absolutely fantastic. It came down to two specific buyers who fought it out who were both looking for it for their collections.

"It is going to stay here in the UK. There were a lot of people from the glass community, historians, collectors – I was really touched actually. There were a lot of people there to witness the moment and by the time we came to sell the lot the room was heaving.

"To date it was a career highlight for me, it is the most important piece of glass we have been asked to handle.

"The family were in the room and I started by saying it was an honour and privilege. I think it was a very nice sentiment that the piece that was made half a mile up the road was being sold here.That is a large statement for the region and the fact we are more than capable of handling an intentionally important piece of glass."

Other high earning items in Saturdays auction included a set of Chinese opium pipes estimated at £4,000 but going for £27,000, an Alvis TD21 Series II Drophead Coupe motor from 1963 which fetched £27,000.

£3,500 is raised by hospice's 'treecycle'

A WEEKEND of Christmas tree collections has brought in more than £3,500 for Mary Stevens Hospice.

Fundraisers spent the first weekend of 2018 travelling between DY5 to DY9 post codes collecting Christmas trees from outside of supporters' homes in exchange for a donation towards the care of the families relying on the Stourbridge hospice.

In order to meet the hugely increased demand, the hospice received support from volunteers and local corporate supporters, including Enterprise Van Hire.

All the trees were taken to Hagley Christmas Trees, who have done the recycling. Bookings have re-opened on the hospice's website for 2019, with some supporters already securing their slot for next year. See www.marysteven shospice.co.uk/event/christmas-treecycle-2019 for further details.

Security has to be tighter at pub after man injured

Report by Annabal Bagdi

BOSSES at a Stourbridge town centre pub have been forced to tighten-up security after a vicious brawl erupted at the venue.

Stourbridge's Bell Hotel came under scrutiny after a customer was left with serious injuries at the Market Street pub in October. But police were unable to prosecute as CCTV at the pub had been switched off and staff failed to alert emergency services.

Dudley councillors have agreed that the premises can remain open but said pub bosses must follow a set of stringent conditions made by police.

The Bell Hotel, Stourbridge

Speaking at Dudley council's licensing sub-committee, Stourbridge town centre's Councillor Nicholas Barlow said: "I think the concerns that have been raised highlight there has been a failure to understand the obligations that staff have. In my view, ignorance is no excuse."

West Midlands Police requested the pub's licence be reviewed after an altercation broke out in the pub on October 22. The victim needed hospital treatment after being assaulted with a glass or bottle in the early hours of the morning.

Door staff removed people from the pub and members of the public and the operator of the council's CCTV calling emergency services when a fight then began in the street.

The force's licensing and regulatory officer Donna Jenkins said the attack was not captured on CCTV as the system had failed to record anything since August 24. She said a female suspect was arrested at the scene, adding: "During this time, no call was made by the venue to the police. Without CCTV, this incident can't be progressed."

Mrs Jenkins went on to say it became clear during a follow-up meeting that the pub supervisor had 'no understanding of the licensing obligations' or staff responsibilities.

Karen Cochrane, representing Marstons, which took over the pub last January, said the incident was a one-off and the company had since changed its supervisor.

Pub staff must now comply with 11 conditions, including having a CCTV system which is satisfactory to the police and getting at least two members of door staff to wear body cameras. Drinks cannot be served in a glass after 11pm, there must be a first aider on site and bag and body searches must take place on entering.

The pub's licence allows it to serve alcohol and hold entertainment until 2am Thursday to Sunday, until midnight Monday to Wednesday.

Fright fans meet stars at horror convention

A TWO-DAY event for fans of horror film and books is being held next month.

Birmingham Horror Con is running at Warwickshire County Cricket Club's Edgbaston Stadium in Birmingham on February 24 and 25. Five of the original cast of Stephen King's 1990 TV mini-series It are attending. There will be stalls featuring memorabilia ,opportunities to get autographs and photographs taken with the stars, plus film screenings over the weekend. Tickets can be booked at www.horrorconbirmingham.com/tickets website.

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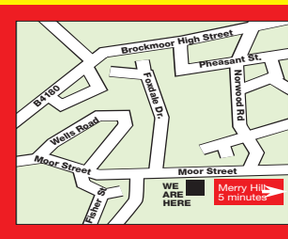

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Lynx is on trail of the lonesome pine

ANIMALS at Dudley Zoo are having tree-mendous fun thanks to leftover festive firs.

None of the 44 Christmas trees that were used to decorate the 11th century castle courtyard and the 40-acre Castle Hill site throughout December are going to waste.

The zoo's Carpathian lynx, meerkats, lions, tigers, chimps, gibbons, orangutans and macaques are among the animals enjoying playing with the evergreens, as they frolic amongst the branches and take in the heady pine scent.

Dudley Zoo curator Richard Brown said: "We can hide food in the branches, but mostly the trees stimulate the animals simply on their own as they love exploring and playing and the bristly texture and unique smell is something different, as they don't get them all year round.

"We're also keen to make sure all the trees we purchase for the zoo site over the Christmas period are recycled, so using them as animal enrichment gives them a second lease of life. Any we don't use with the animals are turned into wood-chipping by our gardeners, which we use across the zoo site, so nothing is wasted."

Meanwhile, over the next 12 months the zoo is getting ready to spend £405,000 on animal projects including new exhibits for Binturong, Prevost's squirrel and naked mole rats, plus a further £150,000 on improving visitor facilities.

The first stage of the work, expected to be completed for February half term, is a £10,000 exhibit for naked mole rats. The zoo is set to receive a colony from Chester Zoo who will take up residence in the newly built burrow system, which will feature glass-fronted panels so visitors will get a clear view of these creatures.

The second phase of the farmyard revamp is to be completed in time for the Easter holidays.

The zoo's Carpathian lynx enjoys the pine scent given off from a recycled Christmas tree in its enclosure

Turning up the heat to bring Channel 4 to West Midlands

METRO Mayor Andy Street has launched a final push to bring Channel 4 to the West Midlands.

The region's Mayor is calling for a full relocation, which would see Channel 4 move its main headquarters out of London to the provinces.

He has thrown down the gauntlet to creative communities in the West Midlands, urging them to show that the region 'is in the leading pack' in terms of attracting the broadcaster.

It comes as the stand off intensified between the Government – which has ordered Channel 4 to move –and the broadcaster, which wants to stay in London.

Mr Street said: "Now is absolutely the moment that we've got to put forward our case, to ensure Channel 4 makes the very best offer to Government."

Four areas in the region have been put forward as potential homes for the channel by the West Midlands Combined Authority: Dudley, Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry.

It is understood that a last-ditch case put forward for Wolverhampton by city MP Eleanor Smith has failed to gain any traction.

Former Culture Secretary Karen Bradley said the Government would force Channel 4 to move, if it refused.

Ben's plans building up quite a reputation

A BUDDING young architect from Dudley has single-handedly set out to improve his home town, having drawn up blueprints to improve an eyesore site near his school.

Eight-year-old Ben Baker-Barnes is on a mission to spruce up the space near Jessons Primary in Dudley, to turn it into an attractive open piece of land for parents and pupils to enjoy.

He submitted his entry in the 2017 World Town Planning Day Schools Competition and was overjoyed to come away with a national planning award.

Ben Baker-Barnes

Anna Baker-Barnes, Ben's mother, said: "Ben has always loved building Lego and creating Minecraft cities.

"He took an interest in disused buildings from around the age of five and decided he wanted to become a builder when he was older and make things nicer.

"We tried to get him to draw his ideas, and that's when we realised he had drawn up a plan for a new house in our back garden this summer. This was not going to happen, but he wouldn't take no for an answer. So I let him write to the council for planning, and sure enough the council agreed with us."

Mayor

Little Ben was not disheartened and to his surprise the council invited him in to meet the mayor instead, and to enjoy a special look behind the scenes at the council planning department to find out what happens.

Mrs Baker-Barnes added: "He was absolutely thrilled to be asked and still tells everyone he meets about it now. One of the planning officers emailed me to let me know about the competition and straight away Ben couldn't wait to enter. We're so proud of him."

The 2017 World Town Planning Day Schools Competition, run annually by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) was open to seven to 18-year-olds.

Using five images, young entrants had to show how they would make their local place more inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

As one of the winners, Ben will receive one year's membership of the RTPI for himself and his teacher, an Amazon voucher worth £50, and a certificate.

Councillor Ian Kettle, cabinet member for planning and economic development at Dudley Council, said it was clear the moment he met Ben that he had a passion for local planning.

He said: "When our officers spotted the competition we encouraged him to enter. It's absolutely fantastic that his entry was considered strong enough to be announced as one of the winners nationally.

"He's quite right as well that site needs tidying up. Although that site is privately owned, we are trying to speak to the landowner to see what we can do."

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Simple steps homeowners can take now to protect their assets

Head of April King Legal Paul King explains why some homeowners are doing too little, too late to protect their hard-earned assets.

Paul King, Head of April King Legal

1. Care Cost Fees

A lot of people are still unaware that if they need care in later life, their assets will be means-tested by the local authority to help pay for these services. This goes back to the Community Care Act 1990, which came into force in 1993.

If someone requires social care in later life, the local authority will look to use the assets of a person until they get down to a lower limit of £14,250, when the local authority will take over the fees.

Paul knows this all too well, after experiencing this personally. *"My own grandmother sadly passed away recently at the age of 92. My grandfather had died many years earlier and left everything to her.*

When she needed care in the last six years of her life, because my grandfather had left everything to her, the house and all the estate were counted in the local authority's means test.

Our clients tell us, 'We've worked hard all our lives, why should the local authority get it all?'

Just as she died, she had gone down to that lower limit of £14,250 – and that's all that her children inherited."

There are many myths about the steps people can take to protect their assets from being used like this. The main one is that a parent should simply sign their house over to the children now, so it won't be taken into consideration for means testing. That's just not true.

Local authorities will actually look to see if you've 'deliberately deprived' yourself of an asset by giving property away, going back over any period in time.

Sometimes people think if the gift is made seven years prior then the house is safe.

This is not so as the seven-year rule only applies to Inheritance Tax and not local authority care.

The solution is for couples to simply not leave everything to each other in the first place.

Paul continues: *"What my grandfather could have done is leave his half of the house in trust to his children, stating that they couldn't have it while his wife, my grandmother, was still alive. We call these Property Trust Wills.*

If my grandfather had left his half of the house in trust to the children then when my grandmother subsequently received care in her later life she would have only been means tested on her own half of the house, but my grandfather's half would have been safe.

Why should he have to contribute his half when he didn't receive any care?

The important factor is that couples need to act in advance. Once one party dies or loses mental capacity, through a stroke for example, they are no longer in a position to do this legitimate and straightforward type of planning.

It is therefore important for couples to act now even if they may not foresee care fees being an issue."

Paul goes on to explain a further important point. Most clients he sees are surprised to learn that remarriage usually cancels a will and makes the new spouse next in line to inherit, ahead of their own children!

Protecting your half of the house in this way, he suggests, ensures that your children ultimately inherit when the survivor dies.

"Had my grandmother remarried after the death of my grandfather the whole estate could have passed sideways out of the family," says Paul.

It's another important reason for home-owning couples to upgrade to a Property Trust Will.

2. Bloodline Trust Wills

The majority of April King's clients have already made standard "mirror wills" with other firms before approaching the firm. A mirror will is when a couple leave everything to each other on the first death, then to the children when the second partner dies. But modern family life means these type of wills leave a lot to chance.

Explains Paul: *"If I have a mirror will leaving everything to my wife and she remarries or goes into care after my death then either the new husband or the local authority are likely to inherit most, if not all, of my estate ahead of my children.*

Even if my children are named in my mirror will it is by no means certain that they will inherit anything.

Once again, this is because a remarriage would cancel the will my wife had previously made with me and make the new husband next-of-kin. This often comes as a big shock to my clients who had perhaps thought that all was in order and that the family bloodline would one day inherit.

The same is true for thinking that their children and/or grandchildren will one day benefit under a mirror will. If any of your children should die leaving everything to their husband or wife and that son-in-law or daughter-in-law should then remarry, then your grandchildren would be the ones to lose out under the line of inheritance.

Worse still, someone else's grandchildren would be in line to receive the benefit of all your years of hard work!

I've experienced this in my own family and I'm sure most people have had similar experiences or heard of someone who has. Bloodline trusts will give greater protection to your children."

Paul continues: *"These things can be avoided by having a bloodline trusts will. Under these types of wills your children have complete control and access to the inheritance they receive from you but give added protection from the twists and turns of modern family life. The wording in these wills states that any money left over on their demise must pass to any children born of them – your grandchildren."*

3. Lasting Power of Attorney

Paul explains how people often get confused thinking that, because they have made a will, their executors can also deal with assets if there is illness, stroke or some other form of incapacity while they are still alive.

"Everyone should actually have two documents – a will that deals with their estate on death, and a lasting power of attorney that deals with their estate during their lifetime," he says.

The lasting power of attorney is a relatively new introduction and is divided into two parts – one deals with finance, the other deals with health and welfare. In many ways it's similar to a passport; a document that's registered now and one which can be physically handed to the attorneys should the need arise. It allows the attorneys, perhaps the children, to deal with banks and pension companies etc should their parent become incapacitated, but also to deal with matters such as where the parent should be living and how they receive care. Your attorneys, again perhaps your children, must legally act in your best interests at all times. You can choose a number of attorneys to act, either jointly or independently, and April King advises on the various options available.

Couples are often surprised to discover that even joint bank accounts can be frozen until the bank sees sight of a lasting power of attorney document

Having a lasting power of attorney removes the burden on children should ill-health happen further down the line. It helps a family deal with bank accounts and so on during a parent's lifetime and ceases on death. Crucially, you have to complete a lasting power of attorney while they are still in good mental health.

If someone becomes ill through say, a stroke or dementia, this option is lost and the family would have to apply for a order from the Court of Protection – a drawn out and expensive process. It is therefore a good idea for clients to plan ahead and remove any future burden from the family.

Once again, all adults should be thinking of this, particularly where there are children or a business involved. It's not just something to think about when you get older, that's the challenge for us.

People think 'I'm not ill, why do I need to make a power of attorney?'

But they're missing the point. This is a document that has to be done in advance. Paul adds: *"The next part is to appoint the attorneys, your children. Don't forget, your children can be the executors of your will and attorneys as well. The lasting power of attorney remains in place until you die unless you want to cancel it. Once it's registered, you don't have to worry if you then develop some debilitating illness. A burden has been removed from the family at an already difficult time."*

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MP backs appeal to help brave little Isla

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin is backing a fundraising appeal for a young girl battling cancer as the fund approaches the £100,000 mark.

Isla Austin, no relation, has been fighting cancer for more than a year and her family launched the fundraising push in a bid to pay for experimental treatment.

Two-year-old Isla has been diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma, and her family are looking to raise £155,000 for the treatment in America. They have raised £95,000 so far from a JustGiving page and various other donations.

Mr Austin said via social media: "Two-year-old Isla has been fighting cancer for more than a year now. Help her access the treatment she needs by donating online."

Since being diagnosed on her first birthday, Isla has undergone treatment including chemotherapy, radiotherapy, a stem cell transplant, a seven and a half hour surgery and immunotherapy.

Isla has been fighting cancer for a year

Ian Austin MP supports the appeal

Parents

Her parents Rick and Anna have organised for Isla to access a 'bivalent vaccine' clinical trial at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, in the hope it will help prevent the cancer returning.

The £155,000 they need to raise will cover the cost of the treatment, travel and accommodation, and ensure a contingency fund for any unforeseen complications while overseas.

Isla's mother Anna, 37, who attended Dormston School in Sedgley, had to quit her job as Isla has regular trips to Great Ormond Street Hospita in London. She said: "We're over £90,000 now. It's phenomenal really. We're all overwhelmed and the momentum is still going.

"There are a lot of events still to happen, we've got so much more planned in the coming days and weeks. We've got friends and family all over the country and abroad, and everyone is behind it.

"I think everyone is doing everything they can. It's so heart-warming that there are so many good people out there.

"With so much negativity in the world it's absolutely fantastic everyone is doing this – we can't thank people enough. It's staggering really and hard to take it all in."

At Wolves' home fixture against Sheffield United on February 3 there will be a bucket collection at Molineux to raise money for Isla.

While Isla is currently in remission from cancer, youngsters with neuroblastoma – the same disease which young Sunderland fan Bradley Lowery suffered from – have a 50 per cent chance of a relapse, and relapsed neuroblastoma has a less than one in 10 chance of survival.

Former Wolverhampton Wanderers keeper Matt Murray is a friend of Isla's family and also backs the appeal. He said: "They're all amazing, a really close knit family. Being a parent myself what Anna and Rick are going through must be so hard. Every bit counts, if everyone reading this could give just a pound it would really help."

To donate visit justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/solvingkidscancer/islaaustin

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Join debate on Powell's Rivers of Blood speech

FOR 50 years Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech has continued to divide opinion and spark heated debate.

It is clearly still of interest today ahead of a discussion on the former Wolverhampton MP's legacy.

Organised by our sister paper the Express & Star, it has already received a host of questions to be put to the six-strong panel at the debate, part of the Wolverhampton Literature Festival which runs from January 26 to 28.

The panel consists of academics, politicians and authors, all of whom have a personal interest in Powell and the impact his words have had on modern day Britain. Readers have put forward such interesting questions as 'If the speech was made today would/should the speaker be prosecuted?'

Enoch Powell's speech has continued to divide opinion

Eleanor Smith is the Labour MP for Enoch Powell's old seat

Anxieties

And 'Can the panelists identify one positive change in local or national life that came about because of the speech?'

On the panel is Wolverhampton South West MP Eleanor Smith, who said after she won Powell's old seat at last year's general election: "I feel it closes that chapter now for good."

Historian Dr Shirin Hirsch is also taking part. The University of Wolverhampton research fellow is writing a book on Powell, and says that his speech created 'a political language to direct people's anxieties towards black immigrants'.

The panel also features UKIP MEP Bill Etheridge – who echoed Powell's words in a controversial speech of his own in November 2015 – and journalist and political commentator Nick Jones, who has written extensively about his father and former Express & Star editor Clem Jones' relationship with Powell.

Wolverhampton-born political activist Patrick Vernon and Express & Star columnist Nigel Hastilow make up the sextet.

Anyone who would like to submit a question can email karen.baker@expressandstar.co.uk, or write to Editor's Secretary Karen Baker, Express & Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES. Readers are welcome to come along and put question themselves. The debate is at the university MC001 building at 2.30pm on January 27 and is free.

Powell delivered his speech on April 20, 1968, at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham. In it, the then Conservative MP warned against mass immigration and alluded to ancient Roman literature when he warned the streets of Britain would be awash with blood as a result of racial conflict. It would become the defining moment of his lengthy political career.

Meanwhile, the winners have now been chosen for both the Express & Star short story competition and the young authors contest. The winners will be unveiled on January 27.

The winner will be read out at the festival by local author Paul Dowswell at Wolverhampton Art Gallery after his talk with fellow writer Ian Billings entitled Writing for Fun and Profit on January 28, 12.30-1.30pm. The story will be printed in the Express & Star.

The four winning stories from the young author competition, open to Key Stage 2 and 3 children, will be performed by performing arts students at Wolverhampton College at the Slade Rooms from 2pm. The Festival will see more than 80 events taking place at venues across the city.

National Theatre tour brings Hedda to Grand

Lizzy Watts plays the title role of the free-spirited Hedda Gabler, one of the great dramatic roles in theatre

THE National Theatre's production of classic marital strife drama Hedda Gabler is being staged at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre.

This modern version of Henrik Ibsen's classic 1891 play has been adapted by Olivier Award-winning playwright Patrick Marber to give a contemporary resonance to the story of a young bride trapped in a loveless marriage, which drives her to extremes. This critically acclaimed production is now on a UK and Ireland tour following a sold out run at the National Theatre.

It is being staged at the Grand from Tuesday to Saturday, January 27.

Lizzy Watts plays the title role of the free-spirited Hedda Gabler, one of the greatest dramatic parts in theatre and regarded as the female Hamlet. Miss Watts' theatre credits include Strife at Chichester Festival Theatre, A Midsummer Night's Dream at The Globe, Blink for Nabokov and Wasted for Paines Plough. Her TV work includes The Durrells and Midsommer Murders and she plays Ivy Layton in BBC Radio 4's Home Front.

It is directed by Olivier and Tony Award-winner Ivo van Hove, who also directed acclaimed productions of A View from the Bridge and Network.

There is an opening night two for one ticket offer and for further details see grandtheatre.co.uk or call the box office on 01902 429212.

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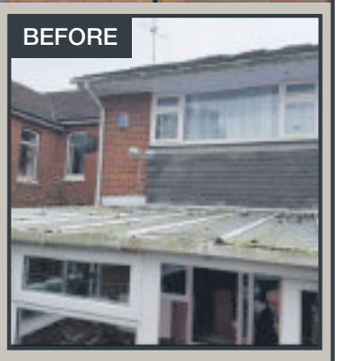

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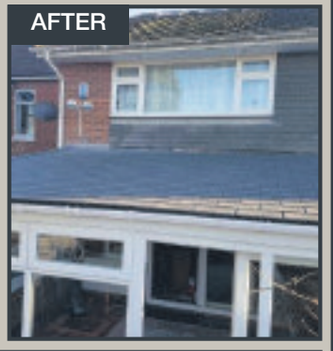

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It's a happy ending for Elsa back from the brink

On the road to a full recovery – Elsa with Lin Reeves from the Animal House Rescue Centre

A DOG which has battled back from the brink of death after being abandoned warmed the hearts of more than 400 people during a special 'meet and greet' event.

Elsa the French mastiff has become something of a star after her story went viral online.

She was thought to be just hours from death when found at Corngreaves Nature Reserve in Cradley Heath but she is now well on the road to recovery.

The desperately thin dog was rescued and taken in by the Animal House Rescue Charity, which is run by volunteers in Sandwell, and given emergency treatment. She is now living with a foster family in South Staffordshire.

Animal lovers were invited to come and meet Elsa, who is now looking much healthier and happier weeks on from her ordeal, at Your Vets in Smethwick, where she was cared for after being passed on by the rescue charity.

There were scenes akin to a celebrity appearance as visitors queued at the door to catch a glimpse of the much-loved dog.

She now weighs 34kg – double that of when she was found on death's door at the nature reserve.

Elsa, who is aged around three or four, was given her nickname because she was found 'frozen'. Charity volunteer Sue Hodges said: "We invited people to come down and meet her following the story which, through Facebook and the Express & Star, has gone worldwide. We had a lot of people who said they wished they could come and be with her so we decided to invite them in."

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Greenline director/owner Andy Phillips is assisted by wife Nikki, brother Simon, niece Amy, and 10 other trusted members of staff to complete a happy and efficient team.

Experience

Andy has many years' experience within the sector having previously worked for a well-known Blackheath coach company until their retirement.

Andy said: "After that company ended, I used to see lots of old customers and they'd always comment on how much they missed their day trips and holidays so that inspired me to start our own company.

"I'm delighted to say we get lots of word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat bookings. Our personal and friendly service combined with our experienced office staff, professional drivers and couriers ensure that our customers' day tours and holidays are always pleasurable and memorable.

"We treat our customers as a name, not a number, and regard them as part of our Greenline family. They receive free drinks, biscuits and treats on all holidays served by our friendly and helpful on-board couriers."

Greenline's smart coaches are modern 16 to 53-seater executive models with air suspension, toilets, air conditioning and drink-making facilities. Holidays are being offered throughout the year including tours to Torquay, Weymouth and Sidmouth, Scotland and Blackpool. The company has invested over £500,000 in its fleet recently and took delivery of a 53-seater luxury Scania coach in April last year with two other new vehicles arriving in 2018 to meet demands for great Greenline Holidays and day tours.

Andy added: "Everyone at Greenline Coaches has a big heart coupled with a huge passion to succeed in what we enjoy doing most in life, which is providing fun, friendship and laughter in the holidays and day trips we provide for our customers. We would like to thank all of our customers for supporting us on our journey over the past eight years and look forward to welcoming them, with new customers, on board in the future."

For the full 2018 programme of day tours and holidays and details of how to book call 01384 444464 or 01384 444161or visit www.greenlinecoaches.com

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Saturday 21st - Saturday 28th July 2018 8 Days **£399**

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Monday 23rd - Friday 27th July 2018 5 Days **£265**

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Monday 3rd - Friday 7th Sept 2018 5 Days **£299**

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Monday 3rd - Friday 7th Sept 2018 5 Days **£309**

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Monday 10th - Friday 14th Sept 2018 5 Days **£239**

WEYMOUTH - FAIRHAVEN HOTEL
Monday 17th - Friday 21st Sept 2018 5 Days **£309**

LYTHAM ST ANNES - LINDUM HOTEL
Monday 17th - Friday 21st Sept 2018 5 Days **£279**

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL
Friday 21st - Monday 24th Sept 2018 4 Days **£199**

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL
Monday 24th - Friday 28th Sept 2018 5 Days **£245**

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Saturday 6th - Sunday 7th October 2018 2 days **£79**

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Sunday 7th - Saturday 13th October 2018 7 Days **£279**

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Piano man looks for key to success

James in action performing his own music

James's celebrity fans include Sir Tom Jones

IT'S a cliché but there's something truthful in the old saying attributed to Theodore Roosevelt: 'nothing worth having comes easy'.

Just ask James Sayer. Like countless musicians he started with a dream. To be a world-renowned artist. He's got talent in his piano-playing fingertips. It has led to being noticed by the likes of Sir Tom Jones, Mumford & Sons' producer Matt Lawrence and The Doobie Brothers' Michael McDonald.

That's why James put faith in himself and his music by upping sticks from Halesowen and moving to the Big Smoke to chase that dream.

"I've been lucky in London," says the 29-year-old former Windsor High School and King Edward VI College in Stourbridge pupil. "I work most nights. It's still pretty tough, but I get to go all around the world and it has been amazing."

He is a full-time musician. He can count recording sessions, gigs, private parties and functions, touring band slots and being one of the resident piano players at the capital's swanky Savoy Hotel among his income streams. It is a nomadic lifestyle, and one that is not aligned to plentiful sleep.

"I'm unsigned so I pump everything in to supporting myself," he adds. "It means you've got to want it really bad. It was tough at first, but now I am lucky enough to live in a nicer area in north London.

Playing piano at a top London hotel has won Halesowen's James Sayer some famous fans

"I am lucky enough to work full-time and all that money goes on rent or recording my own music. I was doing a private party last night for example and I didn't get back until 4.30am this morning.

"But it's rewarding and a great feeling, I am doing what I want and it makes it easier."

Unfortunately for James, success in London does mean that he gets to see his friends and family less often. But despite living among the bright lights he hasn't forgotten his roots. When he does get the chance to play in the Midlands he does, and he has a show lined up at Jools Holland's Jam House in Birmingham on Thursday, February 8.

Comparisons

"It's nice to be able to play there," he admits. "I try and get back every six weeks or so now but it's not always possible. Hopefully all my family and friends will be piling in and it will be good to see them."

Fusing elements of blues, folk and rock in his music, playing such venues inevitably leads to comparisons with Jools himself. But that's not something James minds.

"I've been compared to him and that's fine because I love him," he laughs.

"I haven't been able to meet him yet but a couple of his musicians have played with me before and said they enjoyed it.

"I also love Van Morrison and obviously Elton John as a piano player. I also love Billy Joel's timeless music and the old soul of Ray Charles.

"There's also Michael McDonald from the band The Doobie Brothers. I've got to know him and he is in my opinion the greatest singer ever."

That's quite a claim, especially as another of the vocal greats who spotted him playing at The Savoy and asked for his details was a certain Sir Tom Jones. After a while one of his entourage approached James. "He asked for my number and said Sir Tom liked my playing style and wanted to know more about me. We exchanged details and I am hoping we can get some work done together in the near future."

Hopefully that might lead to some more international work for James, who already has some globe-trotting under his belt.

He was previously spotted by American group Ruen Brothers and played with them in 2015 at Radio 1's Big Weekend in Norwich before the huge American festivals Austin City Limits in Texas and Coachella, in Indio, California.

Hard-working musician James Sayer has impressed with his piano skills

He has also had some successful shows further south in Brazil, where they 'love their blues and metal', while also getting plenty of airplay in Holland.

"It's been a real journey and something I am enjoying," he adds.

And looking forward, he says: "I would one day love to sell out Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London and do so by playing the style of music that I love.

"That is still achievable and I am being realistic about my aims. There are so many talented musicians down here and I am not being too unreasonable.

"I also still love my blues and soul but realise there's not much room in the mainstream for that at the moment.

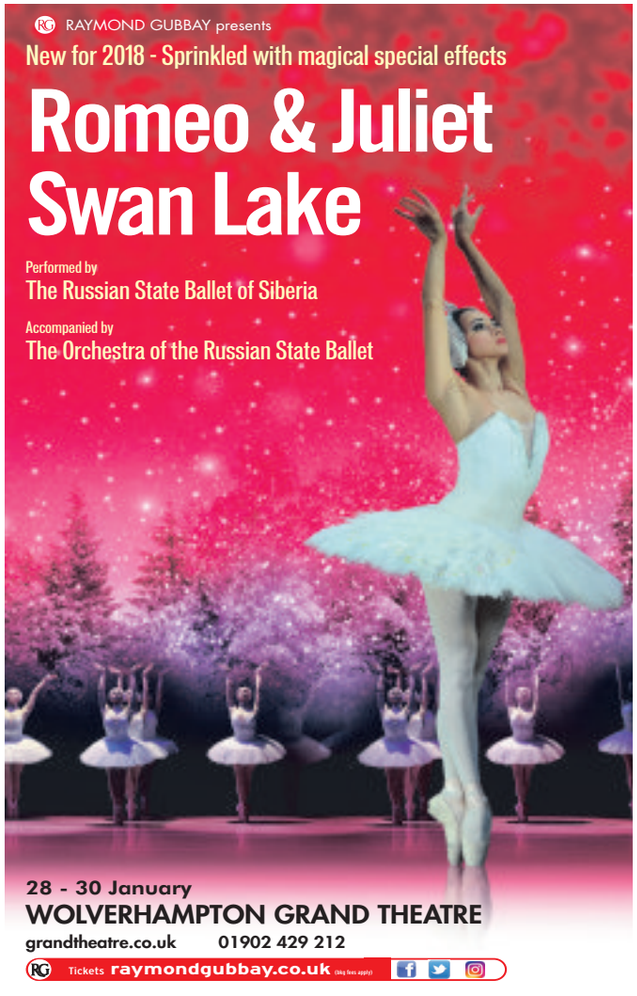
"I'd love to be out there selling out bigger venues, that is the end goal.

"To be as big as I can possibly be," he adds.

Now he has a new single coming out. Called Givin' It All For Free it will be available on all the major streaming services, such as Spotify, Deezer and YouTube.

James can also be found online to hear his material and follow his updates. He can be followed on Twitter @JamesSayerMusic or on his website at www.jamessayermusic.com/ or his Soundcloud channel at https://soundcloud.com/jamessayermusic

LEIGH SANDERS



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Why it's now Strictly business for Ore

Celebrity dancers and their professional partners will return to Birmingham Arena tomorrow (Friday), Saturday and Sunday for five shows.

Strictly Come Dancing fans can feast on the dancing shoes and sequins of Gemma Atkinson and Aljaž Skorjanec; Alexandra Burke and Gorka Marquez; Susan Calman and Kevin Clifton; Davood Ghadami and Nadiya Bychkova; Joe McFadden and Katya Jones; Debbie McGee and Giovanni Pernice; and Jonnie Peacock and Oti Mabuse.

The fabulous celebrities and professional dancers will be joining the tour judging panel of Craig Revel Horwood, Bruno Tonioli and Darcey Bussell.

To round off the sparkling line-up, the tour will be hosted by reigning Strictly Champion Ore Oduba. They will all be joined by more Strictly professional dancers, the Strictly singers and the Strictly live band.

For Ore, it's a dream come true to be involved in the show once more. He's a Strictly addict who watches every minute of every show.

"If there's a slight mistake, my heart sinks and beats unhealthily fast. Even before the titles run, I can feel what the dancers are feeling. What would be funny is if someone filmed me, Gogglebox-style, watching Strictly. It's like a one-man-band of weird."

Ore admitted he'd missed the show so much that he jumped at the chance to get involved when he was asked.

"I'm not pining to be doing it again, but if there's something I miss it's the camaraderie and the backstage buzz. There's nothing like that buzz."

One of the most popular performers at Birmingham Arena will be Debbie McGee. The star was the surprise package of last year's show and didn't realise the chemistry she'd have with her partner, Giovanni Pernice.

"It's one in a million. We realised we wanted to dance together, but I don't think we realised the absolute chemistry we'd have.

DESERVED

"There's a magic that is happening. The other dancers took the mickey out of us. He really cares, he doesn't just care about me, he cares about everybody. He makes everyone feel special and that's what Paul used to do, and that's what I love about him.

"We've laughed about how similar we are. Why does it happen in life? I don't know. We just have this incredible bond. I don't care because we had the most amazing time and we said, 'Lets just enjoy the last three dances', and for me, all I wanted to do was to do the best I possibly could, which I did, so I'm happy. We all deserved to win. It doesn't matter because we had a great time."

Last year's show was the 15th series of Strictly Come Dancing and featured winner Joe McFadden along with runners-up Debbie McGee, Gemma Atkinson and Alexandra Burke.

Joe says he found himself under pressure during the TV show. "You're concentrating on each move. I know she's (Katya) got her eyes out looking for me doing it wrong and having a turned-in foot when it should be turned out and not having fingers pointed at the end."

Despite his success in the show, Joe and the runners-up didn't stick around to party after the Glitterball presentation.

"There was a little bit of a party Saturday night. The four finalists were all so exhausted – I don't think we partied very hard. And I of course had the obligatory cold which descended instantly, the second I won."

Alexandra Burke made her name on another reality TV show – The X Factor – and has got engaged since Strictly ended just before Christmas.

She shared a photo showing her hand with the words "I said yes" written on it, after getting engaged in Paris on December 18.

"So grateful for this amazing man in my life who has supported my family and I through so much," she added.

"We decided to keep this between us for a while to enjoy this special moment and that's why we haven't said anything . . . Something so amazing honestly felt so overwhelming because there was only one person I wanted to call when it happened. I know she is smiling and very happy for us both - because little did I know she knew about it.

"For those who guessed and have left such beautiful messages – thank you. Josh is someone who makes me so happy and I've never felt this kind of love before. Here's to an amazing future that's filled with love, joy and so much happiness. I love you Joshua Ginnelly. I can't wait to see what our future brings and what God provides for us xxx"

Gemma Atkinson, meanwhile, has fuelled rumours of romance with Ryan Giggs, since the show ended. The duo had a lunch date at a restaurant in Manchester, even though they have denied dating.

Atkinson said she was bored by the speculation: "Anyone I hang about with of the opposite sex, people say I'm going out with. Whenever we all go out together as friends people say we're in a relationship."

Atkinson is best known for her role as Lisa Hunter on Hollyoaks and for the character Tamzin Bayle on Casualty. She also plays Carly Hope on Emmerdale and is an ex-glamour model.

The Manchester entertainer rose to fame on Hollyoaks and her star has continued to rise. She has previously featured in the reality show Soapstar Superstar as well as Celebrity Weakest Link and Celebrity Mastermind.

Let's dance – Alexandra Burke and Debbie McGee will perform

If there's something I miss it's the camaraderie and the backstage buzz

● **For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & star every Friday.**

Iain Mackay and Jenna Roberts

Iain's ballet goodbye

TOMORROW night (Friday) the acclaimed Royal Ballet Sinfonia returns to the Symphony Hall in Birmingham for their annual Evening of Music and Dance.

Compered by Birmingham Royal Ballet company director David Bintley, led by principal conductor Paul Murphy and joined on stage by BRB dancers, this event is an extraordinary evening of beautiful music and stunning dance in one of the best concert halls in the world.

This year's programme will include danced excerpts from Don Quixote, La Fille mal gardée and The Sleeping Beauty, alongside Humperdinck's overture to Hansel and Gretel, Korngold's suite from the film The Adventures of Robin Hood and Elgar's beautiful miniature, Sospiri. The programme also includes a pas de deux from Christopher Wheeldon's After The Rain, a company premiere for Birmingham Royal Ballet.

This performance will be particularly special because, after an incredible 18 year career with Birmingham Royal Ballet, principal dancer Iain Mackay will give his final performance. He is to dance the Adagio from Spartacus with Jenna Roberts.

One of Birmingham Royal Ballet's most valued and versatile dancers, Iain's ability to take on everything from classical princes to intense dramatic roles has seen him become a firm favourite with audiences at Birmingham Hippodrome and at the company's touring venues across the UK.

Beautiful start to blockbuster year

There is a blockbuster 2018 ahead at Birmingham Hippodrome, following the final performance of the big festive panto Cinderella on January 28.

It kicks off with Beautiful The Carole King Musical (January 31 to February 3), based on the life of one of America's finest songwriters. The West End hit is making a rapid return to the Hurst Street theatre following its success there last year. It stars Bronté Barbé, pictured, as Carole King.

Dance is always a priority at the Hippodrome and there is a real anticipation around the arrival of Matthew Bourne's radical reworking of Cinderella (Feb 6-10) in a London blitz context. Some may have seen this stylish ballet when it was screened by the BBC at Christmas.

Then Birmingham Royal Ballet return to their home theatre, for the first time since their festive treat The Nutcracker, to perform spectacular family favourite The Sleeping Beauty (Feb 13-24). The production harks back to the glory days of Imperial Russian ballet with a score by Tchaikovsky and choreography by Marius Petipa.

February promises to be a funny month with lots of top one-nighter comedy, not least Luisa Omielan's Dead Funny Birmingham's Big Comedy Gala (Feb 28). Confirmed guests include Sara Pascoe, Nish Kumar, Tom Allen, Suzi Ruffell and Ellie Taylor. All proceeds go to Helena's Hospice Foundation.

Other laughter makers at the Hippodrome include Sean Lock (Feb 27), Dara O'Briain for three nights from March 1 and Jon Richardson on March 10.

Opera takes centre stage when Welsh National Opera visit with La Forza del Destino (March 6), Don Giovanni (Mar 7) and Tosca (Mar 8).

Shiamak Davar, one of the most sought-after choreographers in Bollywood, brings the vibrant Spirit of India with 250 dancers to the Hippodrome on March 11.

It will be a case of Don't Cry For Me Argentina when popular musical Evita returns (Mar20-24) and riotous farce with The Play That Goes Wrong (Mar 27-31).

The first of the mega-shows arrives in April when evergreen West End and Broadway hit Wicked looks at the Oz story from a different angle, April 4 to 29. The summer's big show sees Roald Dahl, the RSC and Tim Minchin's talents combine for Matilda The Musical from July 3 to September 8.

Superska sounds start the weekend

ENERGETIC eight-piece band The Superskas bring mod and skinhead favourite sounds to the Robin 2 in Bilston tomorrow night (Friday). There is plenty for prog rock fans to enjoy at the Mount Pleasant venue with G2 Definitive Genesis on Saturday night, then Lifesigns perform tracks from new album Cardington on Sunday. New Jersey outfit the Billy Walton Band play on Wednesday and its jump 'n' jive outfit King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys with The Miss Fortunes on Thursday.

Violin sensation plays Vivaldi masterpiece

Acclaimed violinist Joshua Bell will be performing Vivaldi's The Four Seasons at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Tuesday.

Performing with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, his concert will also include works by Beethoven and Edgar Meyer.

Also at Symphony Hall, the world's famous brass band, Black Dyke Band, are in concert on Sunday afternoon and John Wilson conducts the CBSO for a Leonard Bernstein programme on Wednesday.

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WOLVERHAMPTON MAGAZINE

SATURDAY'S TV JANUARY 20

CHOICE

Paddy McGuinness

Take Me Out (ITV, 6.45pm)
Paddy McGuinness continues to arrange more dates for his returning panel of 30 single girls. This time, the Love Lift delivers a model from the Wirral, a caricaturist from Blackpool, a student from London, and a musician from Brighton. If any of these men are to secure a chance at love, they must first impress the single ladies enough for them to signal their approval by keeping their lights on.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Everyday. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Live Snooker: The Masters. Coverage of the opening semi-final. **4.30** Final Score. **5.30** BBC News. **5.40** Regional Programme. **5.50** And They're Off for Sport Relief.

6.30 Pointless Celebrities. Gail Emms, Audley Harrison, David Spinx, Susie Amy, Katy Brand, Brian Belo, Lisa Maffia and Marvin "Romeo" Dawkins compete in a quiz for stars who found fame in the noughties.

7.20 Wedding Day Winners. Phil and Beks from Ascot take on Kirsty and David from Swansea, as Lorraine Kelly and Rob Beckett challenge them to compete in a series of tasks for the chance to win a televised wedding and a dream honeymoon. This week's celebrity wedding guests are Jimmy Osmond, McFly's Tom Fletcher and Harry Judd, Pussycat Doll Ashley Roberts, First Dates maître d' Fred Sirieix, and comedian Tom Allen.

8.20 Casualty. Elle and Jacob realise they must tackle Blake's problems head-on when his friend Miles is admitted to the ED.

9.10 BBC News; Weather.

9.30 Hard Sun. Renko investigates evidence uncovered by DCS Roland Bell that suggests Hicks and Butler were corrupt, but she faces troubling questions at home when Daniel, fresh from his visit by Grace, begins to ask uncomfortable questions about both Hard Sun and his father. Meanwhile, a disillusioned former aid worker who believes the apocalyptic warning suffers a dangerous crisis of faith, and the spree killer confesses his sins to his priest, Fr Dennis, but the seal of the confessional causes complications for the police inquiry. Pre-apocalyptic sci-fi thriller, starring Jim Sturgess and Agyness Deyn.

10.30 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Brighton & Hove Albion v Chelsea at the AMEX Stadium and Burnley v Manchester United.

12.00 The NFL Show. **12.30 Film:** Papadopoulos & Sons. (2012) **2.15** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.20** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 The Wonder of Animals. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. **7.10** The Pets Factor. **7.30** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **7.45** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **8.00** The Dengineers. **8.30** Deadly Top 10. (R) **9.00** Robot Wars. (R) **10.00** Steve Backshall's Extreme Mountain Challenge. (R) **11.00** The Snow Wolf Family and Me. (R) **12.00** The Hairy Bikers' Mediterranean Adventure. (R) **1.00** A Vicar's Life. (R) **1.30** Back to the Land with Kate Humble. (R) **2.30** Trust Me, I'm a Doctor. (R) **3.00** Tennis: Australian Open 2018. **4.30** Live Snooker: The Masters. Hazel Irvine presents concluding coverage of the opening semi-final. **5.30** Tom Kerridge: Lose Weight for Good. (R)

6.00 Hugh's Wild West. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's wildlife-themed odyssey through the West Country continues, as he explores the ancient woods and valleys of Dartmoor on a mission to find out more about his favourite garden bird, the long-tailed tit. Meeting local naturalist John Walters, he learns how family life is the key to survival for these sociable birds, and with the help of nature expert Leo Gubert, he manages to track down a hibernating dormouse. Plus, a close encounter with some feisty wood ants.

7.00 Live Snooker: The Masters. Hazel Irvine presents coverage of the second semi-final, played over the best of 11 frames on day seven at Alexandra Palace in London. Despite being an invitational event, this tournament is considered one of the more prestigious on the snooker calendar, and with the winner set to claim a cheque for £200,000, both of the players in this contest will be eager to progress to tomorrow's final. With commentary and analysis by Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Dennis Taylor and John Virgo.

10.30 QI XL. Aisling Bea, Russell Brand and Noel Fielding join Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig for an extended edition of the unconventional panel quiz, this time focusing on "The Occult".

11.15 Performance Live: I Told My Mum I Was Going on an RE Trip. Drama, exploring Britain's many varying attitudes to abortion.

12.00 Snooker: The Masters – Extra. **2.00** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Fangbone. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.20** The Hungry Sailors. (R) **12.20** Countrywise. (R) **12.50** ITV News; Weather. **1.00** Dancing on Ice. (R) **3.00** Celebrity Catchphrase. (R) **4.00** Tipping Point. (R) **5.00** The Chase. (R)

6.00 Regional Programme; Weather.

6.05 ITV News; Weather.

6.20 New You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates more comical mishaps filmed by viewers, including a cat demonstrates CPR skills, and a holiday-maker who seems to have forgotten to pack any clothes.

6.45 Take Me Out. A model from the Wirral, a caricaturist from Blackpool, a student from London, and a musician from Brighton all hope to impress Paddy McGuinness's single ladies.

8.00 The Voice UK. Emma Willis presents as the coaches preside over the third round of Blind Auditions. As always, Jennifer Hudson, Will.i.am, Tom Jones and Olly Murs are tasked with assessing the potential star power of each contestant based on nothing but the power of their singing alone, only catching sight of each performer once they have delivered their verdict. The Blind Auditions represent the concept of The Voice format at its most pure, as each of the coaches aim to fill their teams with genuine undiscovered talent, before progressing the competition to its next stage.

9.30 Through the Keyhole. Keith Lemon invites Paddy McGuinness, Gregg Wallace and Scarlett Moffatt to guess "who habitates in a house like this", as he invades another three celebrities' homes.

10.30 ITV News; Weather.

10.45 Film: Jaws 3. (1983) Thriller sequel, starring Dennis Quaid.

12.30 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.00 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **6.25** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **6.50** The King of Queens. (R) **7.15** The King of Queens. (R) **7.40** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.05** Frasier. (R) **9.35** Frasier. (R) **10.05** Frasier. (R) **10.35** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.05** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.00** The Simpsons. (R) **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.25** Coast vs Country. (R) **3.25** A Place in the Sun. (R) **4.30** A Place in the Sun. (R) **5.30** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R)

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Great Canal Journeys. Timothy West and Prunella Scales explore the Norfolk Broads. This is the first time the couple have visited the area, and they learn about the unique way of life that has developed over the centuries in this network of slow-moving rivers, fens, marshes and waterlogged woodlands. Their trip takes them to a marshman's cottage, the ruins of St Benet's Abbey; and a local Norfolk wherry, and brings to mind events from the book Swallows and Amazons. (R)

8.00 Village of the Year. Five villages from this week's heats compete for a place in the grand final, as Penelope Keith tasks archaeologist Alex Langlands, garden designer Juliet Sargeant and craft expert Patrick Grant with narrowing the field in the Western Zone.

9.00 Film: Sicario. (2015) Premiere. An FBI agent is recruited to join an elite government task force based on the border between the US and Mexico, charged with preventing drugs being smuggled into the country. The team is sent on a secret mission, and the new recruit is forced to question everything she believes in order to survive. Crime drama, starring Emily Blunt, Josh Brolin and Benicio Del Toro.

11.25 Film: Salt. (2010) A CIA agent goes on the run after she is accused of being a sleeper assassin sent to murder the Russian president. Action thriller, starring Angelina Jolie.

1.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **2.05** The Lie Detective. (R) **2.45** Hollyoaks. (R) **4.50** The Autistic Gardener. (R) **5.45** Draw It! (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.40** Pets Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **11.05** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.05** Police Interceptors: Fatal Four. (R) **1.05** The A-Team. (R) **2.05** The A-Team. (R) **3.10** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **4.10** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **5.10** Rich House, Poor House. (R)

6.05 The Wonderful World of Puppies. The documentary reveals how dogs learn to communicate with each other, via everything from barks to squeaks and yelps, and subtle gestures with the ears, eyes, tail and snout.

7.00 Greatest Ever Celebrity Wind Ups. Joe Pasquale narrates another selection of pranks pulled by British celebrities, placing their fellow stars on the receiving end. This time, Olly Murs tricks Caroline Flack with a terrifying driverless car journey, and mischievous duo Ant and Dec catch out chat show host Jeremy Kyle with what might possibly be the oddest guest he has ever encountered. Stephen Mulhern helps rugby star Matt Dawson prank fellow player Austin Healey, and Ben Hanlin recalls the time he persuaded Rylan Clark-Neal into taking a memorable lift ride.

8.00 Blind Date. A dental manager must choose between a picture framer, a health care worker and a sausage maker, and in a Blind Date first, a past contestant is stood up by his date; 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Football on 5: The Championship. Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Wolverhampton Wanderers v Nottingham Forest and Leeds United v Millwall.

9.55 Football on 5: Goal Rush. Colin Murray introduces all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including AFC Wimbledon v Blackpool and Plymouth Argyle v Wigan Athletic.

10.25 Celebrity Big Brother. Highlights of the housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, as they try to get used to living alongside one another.

11.30 The X-Files. The sci-fi mystery drama returns. Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny star. (R)

12.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **8.00** Alaska – Earth's Frozen Kingdom **9.00** Spiral **10.55** The Vietnam War **11.50** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.30** Neil Sedaka: King of Song **1.30** Neil Sedaka Says: All You Need Is the Music **2.15** Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **3.15** Close

ITV2

11.25 Take Me Out **12.40** You've Been Framed! Gold **1.15 Film:** St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **2.15** FYI Daily **2.20 Film:** St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **3.20 Film:** The Smurfs 2 (2013) **4.20** FYI Daily **4.25 Film:** The Smurfs 2 (2013) **5.25 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **6.25** FYI Daily **6.30 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **9.00 Film:** Fast & Furious (2009) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** Fast & Furious (2009) **11.10** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **1.05** Release the Hounds **2.05** Ibiza Weekender **2.55** Teleshopping

ITV3

1.55 Rosemary & Thyme **2.55 Film:** Columbo Goes to the Guillotine (1989) **4.55** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.00** On the Buses **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4

11.50 FYI Daily **11.55 Film:** Superman (1978) **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Ascot. Coverage of today's race meetings at Ascot and Haydock Park. **4.00 Film:** Goldfinger (1964) **5.05** FYI Daily **5.10 Film:** Goldfinger (1964) **6.15** Pawn Stars **7.15 Film:** Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **8.25** FYI Daily **8.30 Film:** Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **9.00 Film:** The Blues Brothers (1980) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** The Blues Brothers (1980) **11.40 Film:** Beetlejuice (1988) **12.50** FYI Daily **12.55 Film:** Beetlejuice (1988) **1.35** Car Crash Global: Caught on Camera **2.35** Tommy Cooper **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

12.30 Film: Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (2009) **2.20** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **2.30** The Goldbergs **5.00** The Big Bang Theory **8.00 Film:** The Karate Kid (2010) **10.40** Gogglebox **12.50** Rude Tube **1.55** Gogglebox **2.55** First Dates **3.50** How I Met Your Mother

Film4

11.00 The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie (2004) **1.00** Vice Versa (1988) **2.55** Fantastic Voyage (1966) **5.00** Congo (1995) **7.15** Source Code (2011) **9.00** The Abyss (1989) **11.45** The Piper (2015) **1.55** Intruders (2011) **4.00** Close

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SUNDAY'S TV JANUARY 21

CHOICE

Linda Bassett

Call the Midwife (BBC1, 8pm)
New series. A new midwife joins the team as the area is rocked by power cuts and blizzards. The new arrival is delayed by the weather and falls ill as soon as she arrives. However, she is quickly dragged from her sick bed to assist with a difficult birth. Nurse Crane and Dr Turner treat an elderly cancer patient who faces losing her house due to slum clearances, and try to convince Sergeant Woolf to allow her to die at home. Jenny Agutter, Leonie Elliott, Linda Bassett, Judy Parfitt, Helen George, Laura Main, Victoria Yeates and Annabelle Apsion star.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.15** Lifeline. **3.25** Big Cats. (R) **4.25** Songs of Praise. **5.00** The Coronation. (R)

6.00 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Countryfile. Anita Rani visits Leicester to discover why spring plants are flowering in winter in the city. She also pays a visit to the city's university to learn about Britain's 300 species of rare plants. John Craven attends the building of a new birdwatching hide at Rutland Water, and Tom Heap examines the challenges faced by rural fire services.

7.30 Still Open All Hours. Granville encourages Gastric to enter an art competition, and faces the challenge of selling a box full of mysterious tins, despite not knowing what they contain.

8.00 Call the Midwife. New series. A new midwife joins the team as the area is rocked by power cuts and blizzards, but she falls ill as soon as she arrives and soon has to assist with a difficult birth.

9.00 McMafia. Semiyon's fortunes seem to be on the rise – until he is arrested in Tel Aviv. Alex and Rebecca announce their engagement, and Lyudmilla sees a chance to regain her freedom.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, featuring highlights of Sunday's only game – Southampton v Tottenham Hotspur at St Mary's Stadium.

11.20 Man Like Mobeen. Eight learns that his father is dying. When Mobeen agrees to visit him one last time, he is unprepared for the terrible secret he learns and the favour the old man has to ask.

11.40 Man Like Mobeen. An anti-Islam march comes through the neighbourhood, and Mobeen ends up sharing a police van with the leader when he takes the blame for Aks' counter-protest. Last in the series.

12.05 Weather for the Week Ahead.
12.10 BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **6.35** The Instant Gardener. (R) **7.20** Gardeners' World. (R) **7.50** Greatest Gardens. (R) **8.20** Monty Don's Paradise Gardens. (R) **9.20** Countryfile. (R) **10.15** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.45** Food & Drink. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Live Snooker: The Masters. Coverage of the opening eight frames of the final. **5.15** Ski Sunday.

6.00 Tennis: Australian Open 2018. Kat Downes presents action from day seven of the opening Grand Slam tournament of the year, which takes place at Melbourne Park, and featured the latest fourth-round matches.

7.00 Live Snooker: The Masters. Hazel Irvine presents concluding coverage of the final from Alexandra Palace, London, where a maximum of 11 frames will be played to decide this year's champion. Last year's showpiece match was a closely fought contest, with Ronnie O'Sullivan claiming a 10-7 victory over Joe Perry to win the competition for a record-breaking seventh time, putting him ahead of Stephen Hendry in the all-time list. With commentary and analysis by Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Dennis Taylor and John Virgo.

11.00 The Mash Report. Nish Kumar and a cast of comedy correspondents present the satirical and surreal take on the week's news. (R)

11.30 Insert Name Here. Comedy panel game in which host Sue Perkins asks teams captained by Richard Osman and Josh Widdicombe to answer questions about famous people who share a name. (R)

12.00 Film: All Good Things. (2010) The heir of a wealthy family marries a medical student, but is suspected of murdering her when she disappears without trace. Crime drama, starring Ryan Gosling and Kirsten Dunst. **1.35 Film:** Good Morning Karachi. (2013) A Pakistani woman hopes to pursue a career as a model despite disapproval from her mother and rising tensions in the country. Drama, with Amna Ilyas and Beo Raana Zafar. **3.00** Sign Zone: Question Time. Topical debate from Hereford. (R) **4.00** Holby City. Essie struggles to use her head over her heart as she gets involved with Gaskell's trial, and Oliver is transferred to AAU for a change of scene. (R) **4.55** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Ben 10. **8.10** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Spy School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** River Monsters. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** The Martin Lewis Money Show. (R) **11.25** The Voice UK. (R) **12.55** ITV News; Weather. **1.00** Britain's Best Walks with Julia Bradbury. (R) **1.30** Britain's Brightest Family. (R) **2.00** The Cruise: Return to the Mediterranean. (R) **2.30 Film:** Kindergarten Cop. (1990) Comedy, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. **4.35** Regional Programme ; Weather.**4.45** ITV News; Weather. **5.00** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.00 Dancing on Ice. Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby present disco week, as the remaining 11 celebrities and their professional partners perform to impress judges Jayne Torvill, Christopher Dean, Ashley Banjo and Jason Gardiner and avoid having to compete in a skate-off to remain in the contest for another week.

8.10 Vera. A mother of two is found murdered in her back garden. Vera and Aiden investigate the case, and delve into the disturbing secrets and ongoing conflicts that lurk beneath the surface of the victim's seemingly peaceful suburban community. The case takes a more complicated turn when the dead woman's estranged family make an unexpected reappearance, and while several of her neighbours may have had cause to carry out a crime of passion, her relatives may have had compelling motives of their own to kill. Guest starring Rita Tushingham.

10.10 ITV News; Weather.

10.25 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R)

11.25 Next of Kin. Mona travels to Lahore to identify Kareem's body and though the trip presents an opportunity to meet Danny, it instead leads her into grave danger in a remote corner of the city. (R)

12.20 Great Art. (R) **1.10** Jackpot247. **3.00** Sunday Night at the Palladium. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.10 Jamie's Comfort Food. (R) **6.20** The King of Queens. (R) **6.45** The King of Queens. (R) **7.10** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **1.30** The Simpsons. (R) **2.00** The Simpsons. (R) **2.30** The Simpsons. (R) **3.00 Film:** Capture the Flag. (2015) Premiere. Animated sci-fi adventure, with the voice of Sam Fink. **4.50 Film:** Aladdin. (1992) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Robin Williams.

6.35 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Posh Pawn. New series. Memorabilia expert Lawrence's knowledge of cars is put to the test as James gets his hands on an E-Type Jaguar worth over £100,000. Plus, Claudia values a customer's extravagant impulse buy and Lawrence goes to Hertfordshire to appraise some unusual artwork.

8.00 The Biggest Little Railway in the World. The train struggles to cross the first hill on the line – which is only a gentle incline compared to the vast rises to come. The team also needs to build a track-stabilising device to prevent the train from falling over, while Claire comes across a rocky stream near Fort Augustus, and makes plans to build a curving trestle bridge.

9.00 SAS: Who Dares Wins. The recruits are divided into two teams for a series of challenges designed to test both their ability to bond as a group, including a time trial run across the Sahara Desert.

10.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. Jimmy Carr hosts as Jon Richardson and Joe Wilkinson take on quest captain Kevin Bridges and Jessica Knappett. Dr John Cooper Clarke helps out in Dictionary Corner. (R)

10.55 Film: Season of the Witch. (2011) Two knights escort a suspected witch to trial during the Black Death, but are not prepared for the powers she possesses. Fantasy adventure, with Nicolas Cage and Ron Perlman.

12.45 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners. (R) **1.40** The Lie Detective. (R) **2.25** Grand Designs Australia. (R) **3.20** Location, Location, Location. (R) **4.15** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **4.45** Coast vs Country. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.20** Poppy Cat. (R) **6.35** Wissper. (R) **6.40** Milkshake! Bopping About. (R) **6.45** Simon. (R) **6.50** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.00** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.10** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.20** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.30** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.40** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.00** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.20** Nella the Princess Knight. **8.35** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.50** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.40** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.15** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.10** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.45 Film:** Pixels. (2015) Sci-fi comedy, starring Adam Sandler. **2.35 Film:** Big Daddy. (1999) Comedy, starring Adam Sandler. **4.15 Film:** Mr Deeds. (2002) Romantic comedy remake, starring Adam Sandler and Winona Ryder. **5.20** 5 News Update. **5.25 Film:** Mr Deeds. (2002) Concluded.

6.00 Film: Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves. (1991) An English nobleman returns home from the crusades to find his father has been murdered and the local people are repressed by the tyrannical rule of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Branded an outlaw, he recruits a group of bandits to fight for justice and protect the downtrodden. Action adventure, starring Kevin Costner, Alan Rickman, Morgan Freeman and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.

7.00 5 News Update.

7.05 Film: Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves. (1991) Concluded.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. Highlights of another day for the illustrious inhabitants as they cope with the day-to-day complications of life under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, while also dealing with one another's quirks and foibles.

10.00 Film: Life As We Know It. (2010) Two people who do not get on are forced to live together when they are named guardians of their dead friends' baby daughter. Comedy, starring Katherine Heigl and Josh Duhamel.

12.10 Film: That's My Boy. (2012) Comedy, starring Adam Sandler and Andy Samberg. **2.15** SuperCasino. **3.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **4.00** Get Your Tatts Out: Kavos Ink. **4.45** House Doctor. (R) **5.10** Wildlife SOS. (R) **5.35** Divine Designs. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** The Tea Trail with Simon Reeve **9.00** Hunt v Lauda: F1's Greatest Racing Rivals **10.00 Film:** Before the Winter Chill (2013) **11.40** Natural World **12.40** Hunt v Lauda: F1's Greatest Racing Rivals **1.40** The Tea Trail with Simon Reeve **2.40** Art, Passion & Power: The Story of the Royal Collection **3.40** Close

ITV2
12.25 Take Me Out **1.45** The Voice UK **3.20 Film:** The Flintstones (1994) **4.20** FYI Daily **4.25 Film:** The Flintstones (1994) **5.05 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **6.05** FYI Daily **6.10 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.30 Film:** Zack and Miri Make a Porno (2008) **1.30** FYI Daily **1.35 Film:** Zack and Miri Make a Porno (2008) **2.25** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
11.55 Foyle's War **6.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **8.00** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00** Birds of a Feather **11.00 Film:** The Sting (1973) **1.30** Blue Murder **2.50** Rosemary & Thyme **3.40** Road to Avonlea **5.25** On the Buses **5.55** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4
12.00 Film: Superman (1978) **1.20** FYI Daily **1.25 Film:** Superman (1978) **3.00 Film:** Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **4.00** FYI Daily **4.05 Film:** Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **4.40 Film:** Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986) **5.40** FYI Daily **5.45 Film:** Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986) **6.45** Hornblower **9.00 Film:** Unknown (2011) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10 Film:** Unknown (2011) **11.20 Film:** Scarface (1983) **12.20** FYI Daily **12.25 Film:** Scarface (1983) **2.35** The Protectors **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.00 Melissa & Joey **1.30 Film:** Escape from Planet Earth (2013) **3.10** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **3.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00 Film:** Lockout (2012) **10.55** The Big Bang Theory **11.55** Gogglebox **2.05** Rude Tube **3.00** First Dates **3.50** Hollyoaks

Film4
11.00 Support Your Local Sheriff! (1969) **1.00** Stuart Little 2 (2002) **2.35** One Fine Day (1996) **4.45** Cheaper By the Dozen 2 (2005) **6.40** A Good Year (2006) **9.00** Avatar (2009) **12.10** Priest (2011) **1.55** Les Combattants (2014) **4.00** Close

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
A Stranger with My Kids, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Single mother Karen hires male nanny Alex to help with her two young sons, but he has other plans and wants her family as his own. Thriller, starring Ashley Scott and Mitch Ryan. (2017)

TUESDAY
Dance Night Obsession, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A professional dancer on a popular TV competition is murdered and one of her colleagues seems to have a mysterious stalker who is intent on forcing her off the show, but it soon becomes clear the killer wants her dead too. Thriller, starring Sabrina Bryan. (2016)

WEDNESDAY
The Danish Girl, ITV, 10.45pm
Artist Gerda Wegener unveils a portrait of her husband Einar dressed as a woman in 1920s Copenhagen. Einar realises that the woman in the painting is his true identity, and decides to become one of the first people to undergo sex reassignment surgery. Period drama based on David Ebershoff's novel inspired by the true story of artist Lili Elbe, starring Eddie Redmayne and an Oscar-winning Alicia Vikander. (2015)

Drive, Friday, BBC2, 11.05pm

THURSDAY
Driven Underground, Channel 5, 3.15pm
After her teenage daughter becomes a key witness to a mob killing and she suspects a leak inside the police force, a single mother takes her family to live in Oregon. However, as they struggle to adjust to their new life, both the police and and the killers start a nationwide search for them. Drama, starring Kristy Swanson, Emily Tennant and Lochlyn Munro. (2015)

FRIDAY
Drive, BBC2, 11.05pm
A stuntman who moonlights as a getaway driver tries to protect the wife and child of an imprisoned criminal. When the convict is released, the driver tries to convince him to give up his life of crime for his family's sake, but when they work together on a robbery, they end up drawn into a conflict with the Mafia. Crime drama, with Ryan Gosling, Carey Mulligan and Bryan Cranston. (2011)

PICK OF THE WEEK

Honouring the best of the best in the TV world

We love the Oscars, Golden Globes and Emmys - the Baftas aren't half bad either.

But our favourite film or TV-related gong-giving ceremony of all has to be The National Television Awards.

Why? The answer is simple: because every award is voted for by the people who really count - those of us who tune in at home.

Forget the critics or the contributors' fellow cast and crew members, it's the folk who watch the shows whose opinions count the most, because without them, there would be no programmes to start off with.

So if your favourite doesn't bag a trophy on the night, you only have yourself to blame for not backing them.

Many critics believe we're in a golden age of TV, and it's hard to disagree with them. The rise and rise of on demand services means that big guns such as the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky have had to raise their games to compete with Netflix and Amazon.

As a result, we've seen some cracking shows this year, from the final instalment of Broadchurch to a fond farewell to Peter Capaldi's tenure in Doctor Who, not to mention The Great British Bake Off's move to Channel 4.

Many believed that the latter would be a flop after original hosts Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins and judge Mary Berry quit. However, their replacements – Sandi Toksvig, Noel Fielding and Prue Leith – have more than filled their shoes and, if anything, the programme is better than ever.

Bake Off is in the running for the Challenge Show title, and if it doesn't beat Love Island, MasterChef and I'm a Celebrity… Get Me Out of Here! we'll eat our hats, providing they're covered in spun sugar and don't have soggy bottoms, of course.

The biggest change in the proceedings comes with the creation of a Crime Drama category to reflect just how many such shows are produced these days – as well as their overwhelming popularity.

Broadchurch, Line of Duty, Little Boy Blue and Sherlock are all in the running, but it's left the good, old-fashioned Drama section a little light on quality, with Call the Midwife, Casualty, Doctor Foster, Game of Thrones and Liar as the nominees.

All are decent enough, but with less to choose from it's what's missing that is baffling – where are Taboo, The Moorside and Three Girls, for starters?

But then that can often be the joy of such ceremonies – the arguing about who or what is missing, and who or what should have been the winner; it's the kind of debate between friends that can last a very long time indeed.

Phillip Schofield, Tom Hardy, Sheridan Smith, David Tennant, Peter Kay's Car Share, Gogglebox, Loose Women and Coronation Street are also up for awards on the night.

Another change involves renaming one trophy The Bruce Forsyth Entertainment Award after the legendary performer.

The National Television Awards 2018, Tuesday, ITV, 7.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Surgeons: At the Edge of Life
BBC2, 9pm
Although not for the squeamish, let alone those who have a procedure planned in the next few months, this documentary series has been riveting. It concludes with an episode entitled The Pioneers, which focuses on some of the clinical trials being carried out at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham. Cameras track three trials at the vanguard of medicine, on donor livers, implantable microphones and prostate cancer, while viewers learn what it's like to take part in this kind of experimental treatment - for both surgeons and patients. With specialist fixed-rig cameras, head-cams and microscope feeds, we once more learn more about the miracles that take place on Britain's operating tables every single day. Once again, it proves that for sheer drama, these particular theatres take some beating.

TUESDAY
Love and Hate Crime
BBC1, 10.45pm
This fascinating series originated on BBC3 and offers an insight into some of the hate crimes committed in the US every year. Last week focused on a young man who murdered his lover in a fit of rage after discovering she was transgender. This time the focus is on the murder of James Andersion, a black man who was mowed down by a gang of white youths travelling in a truck; an incident described as a modern-day lynching by the media. Here, cameras follow the story of 18-year-old Sarah Graves, who was in the vehicle, as she faces trial. There's also an insight into how what has happened has impacted on her family and how she became involved with a racist group, as well as a look at the case from the perspective of the police and Anderson's loved ones.

WEDNESDAY
Stealing Van Gogh
BBC2, 9pm
Andrew Graham-Dixon is currently appearing on BBC Four every Tuesday evening as presenter of Art, Passion & Power: The Story of the Royal Collection, but he's also found the time to front this fascinating documentary. It takes an in-depth look at the true story behind the greatest art heist of the 21st century to date, which involved the theft of two valuable paintings from the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam in December 2002; they were eventually recovered in Naples more than a decade after the crime took place. Graham-Dixon's exploration takes him across Europe where he meets the detectives involved in cracking the case, as well as art experts and prosecutors who reveal exactly what happened to the masterpieces.

Death in Paradise, Thursday, BBC1, 9pm

THURSDAY
Big Cats
BBC1, 8pm
The final documentary focuses on the scientists who are studying wild cats in more detail than ever before - and the ground-breaking discoveries they are making. Professor Alan Wilson has been researching the cheetah, using hi-tech collars to rewrite what is understood about the fastest animal on land - revealing that its speed is not its greatest weapon. There is also a look at cat conservation, with stories including that of the Iberian lynx. Just five years ago this was considered the rarest cat on the planet. Now, thanks to a captive breeding programme, numbers are increasing in the wild. Last in the series.

Death in Paradise
BBC1, 9pm
DI Mooney and the team become embroiled in the mysterious world of faith healing when a blind woman dies while being treated by renowned healer Steadman King. When it turns out the victim was poisoned, all eyes turn to Steadman and his cup of holy water. But how could the prime suspect have carried out the deed in front of an audience without anyone noticing? Meanwhile, JP is put through his paces when Pico the police dog joins the team on a week-long trial, and Florence tries to recreate some of Jack's home comforts.

FRIDAY
Costa Del Celebrity
Channel 5, 8pm
Anne Diamond, Nick Owen, Ainsley Harriott, Vicki Michelle and Christine Hamilton end their Spanish adventure at a family-run vineyard during the grape harvest. Last in the series.

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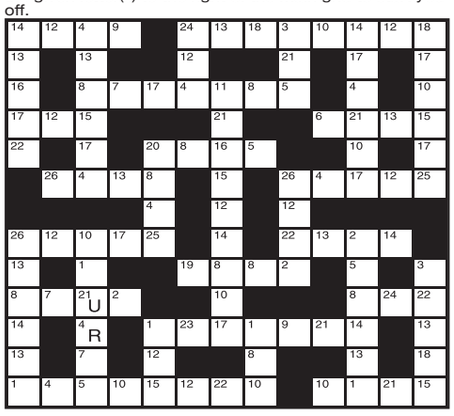
BRAIN GYM

No.463

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



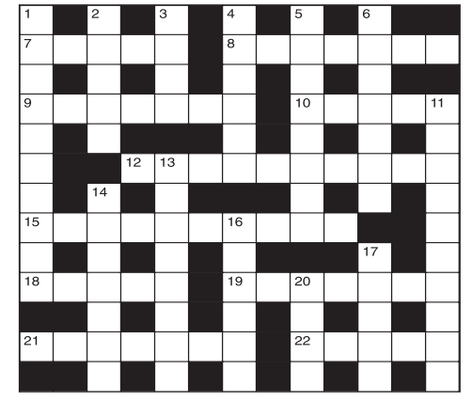
1	14
2	15
3	16
4 R	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21 U
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1 T	2 C	3 O	4 W	5 F	6 D	7 L	8 J	9 E	10 V	11 K	12 H	13 G
14 Y	15 U	16 X	17 A	18 I	19 M	20 S	21 R	22 Q	23 Z	24 P	25 B	26 N

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.



Cryptic Clues:

Across

7. Greek character featured in some games (5)
8. Not in the list of actors for "The Exile" (7)
9. & 10Ac. Finish no bar tending, in a way (5,2,2,3)
10. See 9 Across.
12. Strange silent seas are indispensable (10)
15. How the standard is raised at the passing-out parade! (2,4-4)
18. Takes a translation of the poet (5)
19. See 21 Across.
21. & 19Ac. To whom events are crystal clear? (7-7)
22. Join the forces and work in the mess (5)

Down

1. Presumably it's not for the single-minded conversationalist (6,4)
2. Right time arranged to send to another court (5)
3. Disreputable crowd to go in Scotland (4)
4. Suffering from depression - got up after the doctor is seen (6)
5. Fabulous island found when the ocean's end is changed (8)
6. Arrived with the artist's equipment for pictures (7)
11. Upset when locks have been removed? (10)
13. Has an open-air stall and disposes of the stock (5,3)
14. It provides entertainment at playtime (7)
16. Molecular structure to be of importance (6)
17. See 20 Down.
20. & 17Dn. Fail to make a red card and become discouraged (4,5)

Quick Clues:

Across

7. Shove (5)
8. Notice (7)
9. Feat (7)
10. Change (5)
12. Irreverence (10)
15. All-knowing (10)
18. Unmoving (5)
19. Zeal (7)
21. Detergent (7)
22. Circular (5)

Down

1. Fawning (10)
2. Break out (5)
3. Nought (4)
4. Janitor (6)
5. Thug (8)
6. Inscribed (7)
11. Backward (10)
13. Cheeky (8)
14. Unbeliever (7)
16. Acquaint (6)
17. Fashion (5)
20. Unusual (4)

Sudoku

3			7		6		5	9
		6	9			1		
	9		2		1		8	
4			6			9		
	8			5				
		7				6		8
	2				4		6	
		4		2	7	5		
9		8	5		3			1

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

6	5	4	7	1	2	9	3	8
7	3	9	8	4	5	1	2	6
2	8	1	9	3	6	4	7	5
9	6	2	3	5	4	7	8	1
4	1	3	6	8	7	2	5	9
8	7	5	1	2	9	6	4	3
3	4	6	2	9	8	5	1	7
5	9	8	4	7	1	3	6	2
1	2	7	5	6	3	8	9	4

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Starboard; 8 Ado; 9 Seat of power; 11 Lectern; 12 Guest; 13 Orient; 15 Prison; 17 Tenet; 18 Reprove; 20 Arctic ocean; 22 Eel; 23 Dissenter. Down: 2 Tie; 3 Broke; 4 Alpine; 5 Dowager; 6 Barber's pole; 7 Constance; 10 Auction sale; 11 Lion-tamer; 14 Noticed; 16 Armies; 19 Probe; 21 Aye.
QUICK - Across: 1 Advantage; 8 Nil; 9 Impertinent; 11 Harness; 12 Eerie; 13 Leeway; 15 Strove; 17 Cruel; 18 Cutlass; 20 Lawlessness; 22 Sol; 23 Dangerous. Down: 2 Dim; 3 Nerve; 4 Amidst; 5 Element; 6 Interrogate; 7 Blameless; 10 Perpetually; 11 Holocaust; 14 Allowed; 16 Screen; 19 Taste; 21 Sou.

Quiz

1. Which London theatre was founded in 1818 as the Coburg?
2. Who described the poorest of the poor as the lumpenproletariat?
3. Which Lost Generation novelist wrote Manhattan Transfer?
4. What is the administrative centre of Dorset?
5. Who wrote Lord of the Rings?
6. In Greek mythology, what were the fifty daughters of Doris called?
7. From what is the antibiotic melittin extracted?
8. Who, according to the Bible, said ´Ecce Homo'?
9. What does the soya bean product TVP stand for?
10. In which year was the cricket World Cup first held?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Old Moore's Almanac; 2 CS gas; 3 Eugene Ionesco; 4 Washington DC; 5 Radio 5 Live; 6 Sinclair Lewis; 7 Cardinal Wolsey; 8 Harare; 9 Louis XVI; 10 A beetle.

Niner: SINGAPORE

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

163276 gives a cat,
9245696 gives a type of cat,
5648 gives cat food.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Hola! Mi casa es su Casa Ruiz

THE floor runs south like ley lines squiggling their way to the Antarctic. A rickety old building, off Bridgnorth's High Street, that was probably built around the time that witches were tied to chairs and soaked in rivers, houses the town's delightfully friendly tapas bar.

It's stood the test of time. Casa Ruiz has seen off young pretenders and remains a perennial favourite among Bridgnorth's gourmandising cognoscenti. It's a delightful little space: all low ceilings, mind-your-head-on-the-staircase and frilly little drapes that cover the windows as though you're in some seedy, backstreet Bilbao diner. All it needs is a pair of Vincent-and-Flavia lookalikes to dance a steamy Argentine tango and it would score 10-10 for authenticity.

Good tapas is very much about the atmosphere and the vibes were bang on when my friend and I visited Casa Ruiz for a midweek supper.

Test of time – the Casa Ruiz in Bridgnorth

Spanish surprise – chicken and chorizo tacos

GENEROUS

Three tables were full of chat and bonhomie. Friends were telling tall stories as patatas bravas and generous glasses of Spanish red were ferried to the table. It was a back-slapping, high-fivin', belly-laughing, good-time.

The restaurant manager was fantastic. Though she'd got a good crowd in, the odds were stacked against her. An ordering issue meant half of the menus on the item – including most of the ones that we were going to choose – were off the menu. In such circumstances, you'd reasonably imagine the scores on the doors would start to plummet from a solid eight to a miserable four.

She came to our table apologising profusely and told us that it was down to an unexpectedly busy start to the week. And so we ate food that we didn't expect to eat: pulled chicken and chorizo tacos instead of shells stuffed with pork and beef, mushrooms instead of little baby squid, you know the drill. The food was decent. It wasn't great. It wasn't stand out, like the service. But it was okay.

I started with jamon iberico, cured ham produced in Spain from pigs that feasted on acorns. The ham was tender and sweet. Deep fried battered balls of cheese, ham and chorizo were less impressive.

My tacos were reasonable. The Great Bridgnorth Beef and Pork Famine of 2017 – which is ironic, given that Casa Ruiz is above a butcher's shop. . . where's common sense and a quick visit to the shops when you need it? – meant a new version was making its debut. The chef had knocked up a pulled chicken and chorizo stew with a few beans and veg, then stuffed them into some of El Paso's finest shells. Pots of salsa and cheese with a few strategically placed corn chips were served alongside it. It was fine, the sort of thing people whip up at home.

My friend's plan to order a smorgasbord of fish dishes was scuppered by The Great Bridgnorth Fish Famine of 2017 – yeah, yeah, yeah, which is odd because. . . – but she soldiered on. Prawns were plump like a fat man's fingers, mushrooms were earthy like an autumn wood and her bowl of patatas bravas was towering. We stayed for pud. A baked strawberry cheesecake was light, fruity and sweet. And an almond tart was equally delicious.

Great service elevates Casa Ruiz's score from a six to an eight – the restaurant manager was THAT good. When service is that warm and sincere, it doesn't really matter if the kitchen and the delivery man can't quite get it together.

ANDY RICHARDSON

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Aladdin

Already a smash-hit on Broadway, this fantastic show follows the story of a rakish street urchin-turned-handsome-prince in Disney's lavish musical production of Aladdin, now at the Prince Edward Theatre.

Directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw (The Book of Mormon), Aladdin the Musical gives you the catchy songs from the classic Disney film plus new material by Alan Menken (Beauty and the Beast) with lyrics by Howard Ashman (Beauty and the Beast) and Sir Tim Rice (The Lion King).

London Theatre Break

2 Days Self-Drive - Evening Show

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Price Includes...

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- ✔ Free time in London

2 Days Self-Drive only **£139**

★★★★
"...a magic carpet ride to panto land"
The Guardian

The Lion King

The smash-hit story of Simba the lion and his Serengeti journey from runaway to ruler of the plains has been a sell-out success ever since it opened on Broadway in 1997 and at London's Lyceum Theatre in 1999.

A theatre adaptation of a Disney classic, with music by Elton John and Tim Rice, a musical score by Hans Zimmer, arrangements by Lebo M and a plot loosely based on Hamlet, this multiple Tony and Olivier award-winning show has become the top-earning title in box office history, surpassing Lloyd Webber's Phantom of the Opera.

London Theatre Break

2 Days Self-Drive - Evening Show

Departing Friday 16 Feb

Price Includes...

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★★★★★
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Dom O'Hanlon, londontheatre.co.uk

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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING

Property packed with 'wow' factor enjoys open views

'Greenbank' 171 Wolverhampton Road, Sedgley, is an absolutely stunning bespoke property packed with the "wow factor".

It is for sale through Taylors Estate Agents at £575,000 with no chain. Situated on its own private drive in a sought-after area, it lies secluded and within a unique location in Sedgley. It has sweeping gardens and stunning open views.

This generously-sized property has so much to offer. It includes a porch, an imposing entrance hallway, three reception rooms, a hand-crafted kitchen/diner, an attractive guest W/C, utility room, three double bedrooms, two bathrooms, a double garage and an enormous gravelled driveway to the front.

In more detail, the porch has tiled flooring, a timber frame door and folding doors leading to the imposing entrance hallway. This has stairs to the first floor and cornicing to the ceiling rail. Off this, the stunning living room has a leaded window to the front and a bay window to the side, giving extensive open views, plus an attractive feature fireplace.

The sitting room has a window to the front, a gas fire and a storage cupboard. Again having a feature fireplace, the dining room has a window seat in a bay window to the side. There is also a storage cupboard and guest WC.

The bespoke fitted kitchen has a range of wall and base units, wooden work tops, an island with an integrated drawers and granite work top, a window to the side and double built-in storage cupboards. Off this is the pantry. To complete the ground floor is a rear hallway with tiled flooring and a utility room.

On the first floor, bedroom one has a side window, doors to under eaves storage and a walk-in wardrobe and en-suite. Bedroom two has a picture rail, side window, access to under eaves storage and an en-suite. Bedroom three has a built-in wardrobe and access to under eaves storage.

Outside there is a garage with sliding doors to the front and overhead storage. The side and rear gardens feature attractive mature shrubs and raised beds and borders, a paved patio seating area with extensive distant open views and lawns.

SEDGLEY £575,000

TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

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Bungalow in a sought-after spot needing some updating

KINGSWINFORD
£209,950 <<<

Delightfully located within a small and highly sought-after cul-de-sac, 8 Edale Close, Kingswinford, lies close to the fringes of beautiful open countryside.

Requiring some updating, it is for sale through Taylors Estate Agents at £209,950 with no chain.

The spacious and well-maintained layout includes an entrance hall, a large attractive lounge, a kitchen, an inner hall, two bedrooms, a full width lean-to garden room and shower room. The property is set back beyond the front lawn with a driveway, garage and a small private rear garden.

Edale Close forms part of the sought-after "Briars Wood/ Briars Croft" development.

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New

SEDGLEY, Ferndown Avenue

NO UPWARD CHAIN. Vastly extended semi-detached property located in the extremely sought after area of Sedgley. Benefitting from gas central heating and double glazing, this well-proportioned family home also boasts; porch, hallway, extended through lounge, kitchen, utility, guest W/C, FIVE BEDROOMS, family bathroom, good-sized garage, enclosed rear garden and driveway to front. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £209,950

New

COSELEY, Turls Hill Road. Hurst Hill

Fantastically situated with open country views to front and woodland to the back, this ideal starter home has so much to offer. As well as double glazing and gas central heating this TWO BEDROOMS property also boasts entrance porch, living room, breakfast-kitchen, utility room/ guest W/C, bathroom, rear garden and drive to front. Offered with NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £174,950

New

COSELEY, Mount Pleasant Street

Spacious THREE (potentially four) BEDROOM semi detached home of character. Stylish gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed accommodation includes lounge (with wood burner), lobby, dining room (with wood burner), upgraded kitchen (integrated appliance's). Three bedrooms, bathroom with white suite and there is a staircase up to loft space (offering potential) with sky lights etc. Landscaped sheltered rear garden. EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £157,000

TO LET

PENSNETT, Elgar Crescent

A spacious 3 bedroom home set in a private development. The property comprises; Living/dining room with doors leading to the Orangery overlooking the landscaped garden, modern fitted kitchen with breakfast area, utility room, wc, a large bedroom with en suite and 2 further double bedrooms and a family bathroom with shower over bath. Further benefits include a garage, driveway, double glazing and gas central heating. Located a stone throw from the Russells Hall hospital.

Monthly Rental Of £1,100

SEDGLEY, Gospel End Road

Enviably situated on corner plot in favoured district adjacent to open fields & with good distant views; an appreciably SPACIOUS, gas centrally heated, double glazed detached family residence offering TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL briefly comprising; entrance vestibule, hall, cloakroom, 19' through lounge, separate dining room, kitchen, pantry. Gallery landing, FOUR bedrooms, bathroom. Gardens to front, side & rear, Double garage. EPC: D SEDGLEY

New price **WAS £360,000, NOW £345,000**

DUDLEY, Hillmeads Drive, Oakham

Wonderfully presented DETACHED property situated in the popular OAKHAM area of Dudley. This good-sized family home benefits from gas central heating and double glazing and also boast a spacious entrance hall, well-appointed living room, dining room, kitchen, study, guest W/C, utility, FOUR BEDROOMS, ensuite to master,bathroom, enclosed rear garden, double garage, driveway to front. VIEWING ESSENTIAL. EPC C SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £329,950

LOWER GORNAL, Straits Road

- CARAVAN SPACE !
- TWO CAR GARAGE !
- FOUR DOUBLE BEDROOMS !

Spacious family home with walking distance of village; gas centrally heated double glazed detached providing hall, cloaks, two reception rooms (formerly separate rooms), Huge breakfast kitchen, and a utility room. Four generous bedrooms, bathroom, double garage, carport, gardens. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £310,000

UPPER GORNAL, Eve Lane

Nearing completion; SPACIOUS, gas centrally heated (underfloor & radiator), double glazed DETACHED house planned to take advantage of sloping site comprising; THREE BEDROOMS (one with shower room en suite), bathroom, and to the Lower Ground Floor a cloakroom together with 25'9" through kitchen/ living/dining room (with bi-fold doors to one entire elevation) with a superb range of fittings. THREE CAR PARKING TO REAR (Off Vicarage Road). SAP: C SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £215,000

LOWER GORNAL, Winrush Close

NO UPWARD CHAIN. Stylishly presented modern link-detached property in the highly desirable area of Lower Gornal. Within walking distance of Gornal village, local schools, bus stops and other amenities, this good-sized family home also benefits from gas central heating, double glazing, entrance porch guest W/C, living room, kitchen-diner, THREE BEDROOMS with en-suite to master, family bathroom, garage, enclosed rear garden, driveway and garden to front. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £195,500

New

LOWER GORNAL, Cotwall End Road, Straits

ENVIABLY SITUATED OPPOSITE OPEN SPACE - Significantly EXTENDED gas centrally heated (combi boiler)& double glazed semi detached within walking distance of so many day to day amenities/schools etc and offering further potential comprising; entrance vestibule, reception hall, extended 15ft lounge, dining room, kitchen, three generous bedrooms (all with wardrobes/cupboards), bathroom, double garage, delightful sheltered level rear garden. EPC:TBA SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £190,000

New

Oldbury, Macdonald Close

SUBSTANTIAL, FOUR BEDROOM, MODERN STYLE TOWNHOUSE comprises: hall, guests cloakroom with shower, utility, attractive lounge, contemporary breakfast kitchen, conservatory, house bathroom, en-suite to master bedroom, pretty garden. EPC

£189,950

Brierley Hill, Mousehall Farm Road

WELL ARRANGED & MOST APPEALING, TWO BEDROOM, LINK-DETACHED BUNGALOW RESIDENCE comprising; Hall, Pleasant Sitting Room with Dining Area, LEVEL REAR GARDEN, Well Fitted Kitchen, TWO GENEROUS BEDROOMS, RE-APPOINTED SHOWER ROOM, Car Port. EPC: D

£169,950

COSELEY, Upper Ettingshall Road

FANTASTIC - Exceptionally stylish, gas centrally heated, double glazed detached bungalow that has been transformed in recent years by present vendors to a stunning specification comprising; hall, refitted kitchen leading into a transverse lounge/orangery addition, Three bedrooms, shower room. Lengthy garden. VIEWING HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. EPC D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £149,950

DUDLEY, Ripley Grove

Meticulously maintained, Freehold, gas centrally heated, double glazed intermediate 'starter home' with superb distant views at head of cul-de-sac briefly comprising; hall, fitted cloakroom, kitchen with range of high gloss cream finish units & integrated appliances, living/dining room (with double French doors out to the garden), store. Two double bedrooms (one with double wardrobes),shower room (potential bathroom). Delightful rear garden, parking. EPC C. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £147,000

DUDLEY, Attingham Drive

Superbly presented, intermediate situated on the popular ATTINGHAM DRIVE development in Dudley. Ideal for first time buyers or families, this THREE BEDROOM benefits from gas central heating and double glazing and also boasts; hall, living room, kitchen-diner, guest W/C, bathroom, enclosed rear garden & parking. Viewing essential! EPC: C SEDGLEY.

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UPPER GORNAL, Priors Mill

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£259,950

A beautifully presented 'David Payne' built modern four-bedroomed detached property in Larch Grove, Sedgley, lies in an enviable position in a quiet cul-de-sac.

Ideally placed for commuting, it is for sale through Hunters estate agents for £259,950.

Number 8, Larch Grove, has been occupied by the current owners since it was built in 1980, providing a substantial family home.

Its accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hallway, lounge, dining room guest WC, a recently refitted breakfast kitchen, utility room, four bedrooms and house bathroom.

Call 01902 672274.

Large rooms in a stunning semi-detached in high street

AMBLECOTE
£350,000 <<<

A home full of surprises, this stunning semi-detached property in High Street, Amblecote, Stourbridge, features large rooms, an impressive breakfast kitchen and four bedrooms, all with en-suites and a house bathroom.

It is for sale through Taylors Estate Agents at £350,000.

Viewings are being strongly recommended!

With gas central heating and double glazing, it has a large entrance hall, a guests cloakroom/WC, two generous sitting rooms, a separate dining room, an impressive breakfast kitchen with an island, four bedrooms – all with en-suite and a house bathroom.

There is also a driveway and an enclosed rear garden.

Call 01384 395555.

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MOTORING

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO THE BEST CARS ON THE MARKET

Polo is taken to the top of the supermini class

By John Griffiths

Volkswagen is on a roll – starting 2018 as the UK's second biggest brand and launching four new cars in a matter of weeks.

One of these is the sixth generation Polo: and with significantly more space, an upgraded interior and some of its technology shared with Audi's R8 supercar, the Polo has the right ingredients to beome the new class leader.

The Polo first appeared in 1975, and since then has found 1.4 million buyers in the UK: the outgoing model has remained a consistent top seller, second only to the Golf in the VW line-up and just beaten by its Vauxhall and Ford rivals for the supermini class title.

That may be about to change. The new Polo is longer, wider and although a little lower it actually has more headroom than the fifth generation car. Engine power options range from 65 to 200Ps, and prices start from £13,855.

The latest Polo is new from the ground up with an upgraded interior at competitive prices

Signature

It is new from the ground up, based on a new platform and a larger body with distinctive styling, including its signature 'tornado line,' a double crease design feature along the sides. LED headlights are now standard too.

Most popular choices are expected to be the 1.0 litre, three cylinder and turbocharged petrol engines (already seen in other group vehicles such as the Golf and new SEAT Ibiza) due to their combination of performance, driveability – due to the extra torque provided by the turbo – and economy.

They produce either 85 or 115PS. There's also a normal aspirated 1.0 litre engine in the entry level model, with 65PS, plus a 75PS version, and two diesels of 65 and 95PS. There will be a 200PS Polo GTi later in the year.

Fuel consumption for the 1.0 petrol units ranges from almost 59 to 63mpg, depending on engine choice and, in the case of the turbo models, whether you choose a manual or seven speed DSG gearbox.

The interior is based on a single horizontal axis for the main instruments and controls, which is particularly clear and easy to use as well as visually appealing. This is complemented by the use of new, higher grade materials, with 'soft touch; features as well as high glass black and contrasting colour trim items – there is even a choice of colours in an un-VW like move away from grey and black.

Together with the additional space in the new car's cabin, this creates a 'premium' ambience, as it the Golf has moved up from supermini to a higher class. That's reinforced by a 25 per cent increase in boot space: at 351 litres with the rear seats up it's now bigger than some cars in that higher class.

The driver's digital instrument panel has a comprehensive information and warning panel between the rev counter and speedo which can be configured to the driver's preference using the optional 'active info display' first seen in Audi's R8. It includes the ability to transfer the satnav map and directions from the centre console touchscreen to directly in the driver's eye line.

The central screen controls the stereo radio/CD player, with the ability to link to exterior devices such as smartphones and VW's 'Car-Net' system for access to a wide range of online services, from the location (and even prices) of nearby filling stations, plus traffic, weather and other information.

The new Polo's platform and engines make the car a delight to drive: quiet, with the sort of composed, subtle ride which wouldn't be out of place in a bigger, more expensive car and yet almost surprisingly dynamic. It handles quick, twisty sections of road so well it would put some 'warm' hatchbacks for sale.

It's confidence inspiring – great handling is primarily about safety and comfort, but for the enthusiast it means fun, too, and the Polo will put a smile on your face.

I drove two versions of the 1.0 turbo engine, the 95Ps SE (£15,930) manual and the near top of the price range 115PS SEL (£19,530) with the seven-speed DSG automated transmission.

Torque

The more powerful model is quicker off the mark (0 to 62mph in 9.5 seconds compared to 10.8 for the 95PS version) but without too much of a penalty for economy, even with the auto box. The official figures are 58.9 and 64.2mpg respectively. It isn't only a question of power, but thanks to the turbo both models have considerably more torque than a normal aspirated petrol engine of equivalent size, and at considerably lower engine speeds.

That makes them feel more driveable: ready acceleration from a standstill, and lower revs (and therefore noise levels) during cruising.

The 1.0 TSI (turbo) models are more expensive than the lower powered conventional engined versions, but with hardly any fuel penalty they're likely to be a popular choice. The real economy kings, of course, will be the 74mpg-plus diesels. The SE is likely to be a popular trim level, too, and is particularly well equipped for its class, with safety features including front, side and curtain airbags, stability, traction and emergency braking systems, a 'front assist' radar controlled distance monitoring system, city emergency braking and predictive pedestrian protection system.

Air conditioning, electric windows and mirrors, hill hold assist, automatic headlights, split/fold rear seats are also on the list.

The test car was fitted with a 'winter pack' of heated seats, headlamps washers and washer fluid warning light for a not unreasonable £285, parking sensors at £315 and an upgrade to automatic climate control at £415.

The SEL comes with climate control and parking sensors as standard, while adaptive cruise control fitted to the test car was a £600 option.

With this all new Polo, VW has done enough to take it to the top of the supermini class – bigger, better equipped and with an upgraded interior at competitive prices – the company can expect some industry awards as well as a boost in sales.

Next-generation autonomous services vehicle

It's easy to switch configurations

Toyota has revealed details of a new fully-electric, autonomous vehicle that can be customised to cater to a business' needs.

Dubbed the e-Palette Concept Vehicle, it features an open plan, cube-shaped interior that can be adapted for various uses, such as parcel delivery, ride sharing or on-the-road e-commerce. Toyota says that it's easy to switch between configurations, meaning one vehicle could be used for various tasks.

The on-board technology will be open to partners in the programme so they can install their own self-driving technology if required, with Toyota's 'Guardian' software in place as a safety net.

The Japanese car maker says that it plans for there to be three sizes available of the vehicle unveiled at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. The one on display is 4,800mm long, 2,000mm wide and 2,250mm high – considerably larger than a Ford Transit van.

The concept vehicle's announcement was made alongside news of a new partnership between Toyota and various 'mobility-powered businesses', such as Amazon, Pizza Hut and Uber, called e-Palette Alliance.

The partnership will use Toyota's Mobility Services Platform, which allows for management of various connected vehicles. This covers a variety of services useful to mobility-focused companies, including vehicle leasing and insurance, fleet management and big data.

Nissan reveals in-car technology that can read your mind

Nissan cars in the future will be able to read motorists' minds to reduce reaction times and make autonomous driving more comfortable.

The Japanese car manufacturer today announced its Brain-to-Vehicle (B2V) technology, which it says can predict human behaviour and detect when a driver is feeling uncomfortable thanks to "brain decoding technology".

Brain waves are intercepted by a headband worn by the driver and interpreted by on-board computers.

Nissan claims it can cut reaction times by picking up the signals that suggest a driver is about to make a movement, such as turning the wheel or accelerating, and priming driver-assist technologies.

The manufacturer says this means the car can act 0.2 to 0.5 seconds faster than a driver, which could make a big difference in reducing the time between seeing stationary traffic and braking, for example.

It also says the technology could be useful in autonomous vehicles, as the system can monitor discomfort and adjust drive settings to compensate.

Nissan even suggests that augmented reality could be used so that the driver sees a different environment outside to create a more relaxing experience.

Executive vice-president Daniele Schillaci said: "When most people think about autonomous driving, they have a very impersonal vision of the future, where humans relinquish control to the machines.

"Yet B2V technology does the opposite, by using signals from their own brain to make the drive even more exciting and enjoyable.

"Through Nissan Intelligent Mobility, we are moving people to a better world by delivering more autonomy, more electrification and more connectivity."

Lucian Gheorghe, senior innovation researcher at the Nissan Research Centre in Japan, who is leading the project, said: "The potential applications of the technology are incredible. This research will be a catalyst for more Nissan innovation inside our vehicles in the years to come."

Pricing and specifications for MG ZS

By James Parker

MG has announced pricing and specifications for its new ZS compact SUV.

Starting from £12,495, the Chinese-built model is available with zero-per cent finance and a seven-year, 80,000-mile manufacturer warranty that is transferable to any owner during the period.

Engines

Two petrol engines and gearboxes are available for the car. The entry-level motor is a 1.5-litre developing 105bhp and 141Nm of torque, paired to a five-speed manual gearbox, taking the ZS from 0-60mph in 10.4 seconds and up to a top speed of 109mph. Fuel economy is a claimed 49.6mpg with CO2 emissions of 129g/km.

The second engine is a turbocharged 1.0-litre that produces 109bhp and 160Nm of torque which, coupled with a six-speed automatic gearbox, can take the ZS from 0-60mph in 12.1 seconds and to a top speed of 112mph. As for efficiency, fuel economy is claimed at 44.9mpg with 144g/km of CO2 emissions.

Three trim levels make up the ZS range — Explore, Excite and Exclusive. Standard equipment on all trims includes LED daytime running lights, Bluetooth connectivity and cruise control.

The range-topping Exclusive model features 17-inch alloy wheels, leather-style upholstery and an eight-inch touchscreen infotainment system that includes Apple CarPlay, satellite navigation and a reverse parking camera. Exclusive models are available from £17,495.

There are three trim levels in the range

Clear statement about quality

Matthew Cheyne, head of sales and marketing for MG, said: "With the introduction of a seven-year warranty, we are making a clear statement of intent about the quality of our design, engineering and manufacturing.

"Our goal is to deliver hassle-free motoring in stylish cars that stand up to the toughest of challenges."

MG's goal is to deliver hassle-free motoring in stylish cars that stand up to the toughest of challenges

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MGZS fuel consumption: URBAN 41.0 mpg | 6.9 l/100km, EXTRA URBAN 58.9 mpg | 4.8 l/100km, COMBINED 49.6 mpg | 5.7 l/100km, CO2 Emissions: 129g/km.

Model shown: MG ZS Exclusive manual with Tri Coat paint (optional extra £695) in Dynamic Red at £16,190 OTR or £215.87 a month for a 60 month conditional sale agreement. Offer shown available on MG Exclusive manual with solid paint at £15,495 OTR or £199 a month for a 60 month conditional sale agreement. OTR prices include VAT where applicable, vehicle fi rst registration fee, delivery, number plates and 12 months 'Vehicle Excise Duty'. Fuel consumption values shown are based on offi cial EU test fi gures and are to be used as a guide for comparative purposes and may not be representative of actual driving results. Offer terms and conditions apply: *0% APR: Conditional sale. 0% APR available on all MG ZS models until 31.03.18. A minimum deposit of 20% applies. 0% is not in conjunction with any other offer. Finance by MG FinancialServices, a trading style of GMAC UK plc, PO Box 6666, Cardiff CF15 7YT, subject to status, availability and terms and conditions. Applicants must be aged 18 or over at participating dealers. See your local dealer or visit mg.co.uk/offers for details.

*Available on Excite and Exclusive models

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A relaxed and refined cruiser with divisive American style

Vignale is a range-topping trim

By Tom Wiltshire

Ford's Vignale nameplate is a luxury sub-brand, which Ford says is a response to customer feedback. Loyal buyers of the American brand were buying more and more top-spec Titanium models, leaving them nothing higher to upgrade to when trade-in time came around.

In response, Ford's added Vignale trim across its model line-up, which acts as a range-topping trim – giving customers extra kit, improved materials, chrome detailing, and dedicated Vignale benefits.

We're testing Ford's flagship SUV – the Edge – in this glitzy Vignale spec. On the outside, the Edge Vignale gets a selection of exclusive paint colours. Once it's been painted, Ford lets its design team loose with chrome detailing – there's a massive and imposing Vignale-specific grille, glitzy chrome wheels and shiny roof rails.

Inside, the Vignale gets quilted leather seats, while Ford's covered the plastic dashboard with swathes of leather. The carpet's thicker, and even the boot is coated in deep-pile shag. Under the skin not much has changed, but there's extra soundproofing to make the Vignale a relaxed and refined cruiser.

The Edge Vignale is available with just one 2.0-litre diesel, available in two states of tune. The lesser model gets 178bhp and a six-speed manual gearbox, while

It's certainly an eye-ctaching car

the top brass can choose the 207bhp version mated to a six-speed auto. Our car was the latter. The engine is fairly refined, but it's definitely no speed demon.

Ford has a strong track record for making cars that handle well, and the Edge is no exception. For such a big car it's unusually good in the corners. But in standard form, the Edge is a very heavy car; the Vignale even more so – and you can definitely feel that weight working against you. The steering is accurate, but feels overassisted – a necessary evil when trying to give such a big car light steering.

Divisive, in a word. Some will love the Edge's combination of imposing American style and shiny chrome – others will find it a bit chintzy. We initially fell into the latter camp, but had to admit the car grew on us as the week drew on. It's certainly eye-catching, and if you want road presence few cars at this price are better. The big problem for most is presented in the centre of that vast front grille – the Ford badge. Unfortunately, the blue oval simply doesn't have the prestige of BMW, Audi or Mercedes, and that will affect your standing in the company car park and, more importantly, residual values.

The Edge's interior is a tale of two halves – the top of the dashboard is a great example, where swathes of premium leather meet a cheap, plasticky storage bin. There's a sense that Ford's expended effort on upgrading materials that didn't need upgrading – like the door cards – and ignored ones that should have, such as the centre console.

The standard Sync3 infotainment is a mixed bag too. It has one of the most intuitive interfaces around, but unfortunately features an ugly UI and a poor-quality screen which is recessed awkwardly into the dash.

Four adults can sit comfortably, and the vast boot has over 600 litres of space. It's also eerily silent on the motorway, thanks to lots of sound deadening. Ford throws the book at Vignale models as standard, and you won't be left wanting for much. Dynamic LED headlights, quilted and heated leather seats, a hands-free electric tailgate and digital gauge cluster all come as standard. You also get Ford's Sync3 infotainment system, with sat-nav, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay.

If you want a big, luxurious SUV, the Edge Vignale has a lot going for it. There's a sense that if you're already sold on the Edge, opting for the Vignale wouldn't be too big a stretch. Those who do go for it will find a spacious, relaxed SUV with a comfortably familiar badge on the bonnet.

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MOTORING

Peugeot 3008 bags best family car in UK awards

The Peugeot 3008 SUV has scooped the award for the Best Family Car in the UK Car of the Year Awards 2018, the 15th award it has won in the UK since the vehicle's launch.

The multi-award winning 3008 SUV impressed the judges with its sophisticated style, premium feel and practicality.

It was also described as a class-leading car and was highly praised for its "game-changing" dashboard design which forms part of the innovative Peugeot i-Cockpit®. The technology that makes up the Peugeot i-Cockpit® offers a more intuitive and engaging driving experience, with a compact multi-function steering wheel, 12.3" head-up digital instrument display and 8.0" capacitive touchscreen with Mirror Screen® functionality comprising of Android Auto, Apple CarPlay™ and Mirror Link®.

The award means that the Peugeot 3008 SUV is automatically shortlisted for the overall UK Car of the Year award, the winner of which will be announced on February 23.

The UK Car of the Year Award was established in 2014 and is voted for by a panel of 27 leading motoring journalists.

David Peel, managing director at Peugeot UK, said: "Winning the Best Family Car in the UK Car of the Year Awards is a fantastic achievement.

The 3008 is now shortlisted for the overall UK Car of the Year

In a particularly competitive sector, the 3008 SUV proved its suitability for families with its combination of robustness and elegance.

"This award adds to the collection of over 30 international awards that the 3008 SUV has won since it went on sale in 2017. Whilst the 3008 SUV has impressed many award panels, the UK Car of the Year Awards is voted for by some of the UK's top automotive journalists, making this accolade a massive achievement."

The 3008 SUV can be fully configured and ordered using Peugeots industry leading 'Order Online' facility at www.peugeot.co.uk along with the rest of the Peugeot SUV range, including the award-winning new Peugeot 5008 SUV.

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ELECTRIC ARMCHAIR, lifts you up and down, £120. Single electric bed, like new, £150. 07399 664451.

Capitol Mobility Showroom located in Bath St, Bilston next to Morrisons with FREE parking
MOTABILITY DEALER
OVER 25 YEARS OF RELIABLE SALES AND SERVICES OF NEW AND USED MOBILITY EQUIPMENT, STAIRLIFTS AND ADAPTIONS, FREE HOME DEMONSTRATIONS.
01902 409929
www.capitolmobility.co.uk

MOBILITY SCOOTERS WANTED . Any condition working or not. Call 07967 003600.

WREKIN STAIRLIFTS reconditioned lifts from £799. New available. 01952 405397/07897 273617

2 Leisure Time

Caravans Wanted

CARAVAN WANTED
Can collect asap.
Caravan wanted.
Call me on 07717 090817

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
All Caravans Wanted
Any Age or Condition
*CASH * WAITING*
Immediate collection
Call Bill on 07825 325 913
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

LET US SELL YOUR CARAVAN/ Motorhome for you and get the best possible price. Severn Valley Leisure, DY8 4HP. 01384 390183

TOURING CARAVAN WANTED. No objection to work, anything considered. Please telephone 07980 365757.

Caravans/ Motorhomes

CARAVAN for sale, North Wales, must go, fees paid till 2019. Quick sale, mint condition. 07590 124226.

Caravans from £10,995 Near Aberystwyth
12 months owner season! Amazing facilities, funding options available from 10% deposit (T&C's apply)
Call Ciaran on 07542456117 or email CiaranAndrewWilliams@outlook.com

Music Shop

BASS GUITARIST REQUIRED for blues and rock band. 07587 222729.

NICOLA ALDRIDGE BA Hons / PGCE
PIANO LESSONS
BOOK 5 LESSONS & GET 1 LESSON FREE!
All age groups welcome. Friendly, professional teacher
07877 665502 or 01902 679559
www.thepianoandkeyboardteacher.co.uk

Sports & Leisure

FreeAds
IT'S FREE, IT'S EASY
For items upto £250.
Online at
bookanad.expressandstar.co.uk

what's on

Book Fair

BOOK FAIR Kinver Community Centre, DY7 6ER, inc postcards. **Sunday 21st January**. Also Bromsgrove first & last Friday each month. Est 1979, Waverley. Next Antique Fair Feb 4th. Home made refreshments. 0121 550 4381.

holidays

Caravan Sales

A CHOICE OF CARAVANS FOR sale from £1995 to £6995, accessory shop, service, repairs,storage Severn Valley Leisure Stourbridge,DY8 4HP 01384 390183 www.severnvalleyleisure.com

Self Catering Holidays

Saundersfoot Bungalow
3 Bed, All En suite, Sleeps 8, Central heating, TV Video, Washing machine, Dishwasher, Microwave
Ring Brochure
0121 353 1575

Travel Abroad

READERS ARE REMINDED to check with any Advertisers that their holiday costs are fully covered by a recognised bonding or insurance scheme.

3 Home & Services

Collectables & Memorabilia

WORLD BOXING MATCHES from 50's onwards, 72 videos, 48 magazines, 4 folders, mint condition. Offers. 0121 530 3793.

Furniture

CONSERVATORY SET 2 seater settee, one chair and coffee table, neutral colour modern, good condition £100. 01902 721494 after 3pm

DISTRESSED French style 3 drawer chest, tall four drawer chest, bed side and dressing table, £250 ono. 0121 5318627 buyer collects.

MAHOGANY VENEER display cabinet, very good condition, 76" high x 70" wide, £75 ono. Buyer to collect. 01562 829078.

THREE SEATER
Drop arm settee and drop arm love chair, gold and red, good condition. **£500 ono.**

One small cream Chaise lounge, ideal for bedroom **£100 ono. 01902 353375.**

Household Appliances

SILVER AMERICAN fridge freezer, 2 doors, like new £200. 07399 664451.

Items For Sale

ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED
That the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

HONDA GENERATOR as new, £300 ono. 01952 276382.

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

Items Wanted

WANTED VINTAGE / COLLECTABLE TOYS
Star Wars / TV / Film Related/ Horror/ Memorabilia
Email or call rewindcollectables@gmail.com 07969 050421.

A BEST CASH PRICE

FOR ALL RAILWAY COLLECTIONS
Any gauge or age
Hornby/Bachmann/Bowmans/ Roundhouse/Graham/Farsh/ any live steam. Also Die Cast, Corgi, Dinky, Spot On.
01384 836219/07891 713547
thetrainmaster67@hotmail.com

WANTED
ALL MILLITARIA ITEMS FROM WARS WANTED BY COLLECTOR
Swords, medals, helmets etc, single or full items.
German, Japenese, British.
Will collect.
Very good prices paid
07511 500337.

CASH PAID NOW! WANTED TOOLS
Hand Tools, Anything considered
01543 452 491
07539 340307

MYFORD SUPER7 metal cutting lathe wanted, any condition considered. 01922 445739.

READERS ARE ADVISED to carefully consider all of their options before agreeing to the sale of any of their items.

SPECTRUM GAMES Wanted, plus any Spectrum 128k+2 computer wanted also any old Crash or your Sinclair Magazines. 01902 892918.

WANTED
VINTAGE TAMIYA REMOTE CONTROL MODELS
Also any old radio controlled models in any condition, Mardave, Kyocho, Traxxas, HPi Team Associated, Schumacher
Big or small collections bought.
07568 585075 or 0121 532 2544.

Kitchens & Bathrooms

PEDESTAL WASH basin and toilet, ivory, rose design, very attractive, suit shower room, all accessories, light pull, etc, £90.0121 679 0697.

Loans

READERS ARE REMINDED that they may require professional advice before entering into obligations.

t.v. / home entertainment

Service

AERIAL AND TV SPECIALIST Any TV Repairs. Digital aerials, sky, CCTV cameras. TV wall mounts and TV set ups. 07850 330251.

specialists at your service

Aerials

A AERIAL AND SKY SPECIALIST Digital aerials, CCTV cameras, TV wall mount fitted. 07850 330251.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS
Express & Star BUSINESS AWARDS 2018
Could you be Tradesperson of the Year?
To find out how, go to:
businessawards.expressandstar.com

AA DIGITAL AERIALS Checkatrade.com
AERIALS FITTED FROM £79.99
01902 858191 • 01384 429166
01543 439095 • 01922 716029

CLASSIFIEDS FOR YOU!

"I am very pleased with the response I get from my Classified Advertising Contract"
Steve - AA Digital Aerials

For great business results call
01902 319 191
ClassifiedAds
Brought to you by **Express & Star**

CLEAR VISION AERIALS Freeview, FreeSat, Sky, CCTV. Aerials from £79. Dishes from £79. OAP DISCOUNT. Tel: 01902 752036.

ALAN JONES
THE ORIGINAL AERIAL SPECIALIST, THE BEST!
Est 1955 - 59 years at the top!
Recommended by thousands
Genuine, honest, 100% reliable
WE HAVE WATCHED THEM ALL COME AND GO
Call: 01902 885985
ANY PROBLEM SOLVED

Alarms/Security

PREMIER ALARMS
Supplied and Fitted £249
Servicing and Repairs
12 Months Warranty
All areas covered
All quotes beaten!
Call: 0121 601 9791

Appliance Repairs

A SAME DAY REPAIR - Cookers Autos Fridges Vacs and Micros. Call 07900 578897 / 07801 746853.

Bathrooms

CHANGING ROOMS
IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING YOUR HOME
enquiries@changingrooms.org.uk
Is bathing becoming difficult?
Let us make life easier
Easy Access/ Wet Room Specialists
Showroom at 47A Kent Street, Dudley
01902 670426
TRUST MARK · CHAS

Building Services

G & D BUILDERS
Over 35 years exp
All aspects of building work
Extensions, loft conversions, roofing, driveways & landscaping.
All work guaranteed
07837 994465 / 01902 579592

Domestic Cleaning

CLEAN (midlands ltd) FOR YOU
Domestic Cleaning & Ironing Service.
Friendly, Reliable & Trustworthy.
Call Anita on: 07854 163 804.

Domestic Repairs & Services

SAME DAY Low Cost Repairs. Washers, Dryers Electric Cookers. 12 mths guarantee. 07850 355552.

Drain Clearance

ALL DRAIN AND SEWER Blockages cleared fast. Call Fast Clean: 01902 736424.

Driveways & Patios

CRETE BY DESIGN
Concrete Imprinting
* BLOCK PAVING * TARMACING
* RESIN DRIVES FREE QUOTES
01902 489633 (day) or 01902 604187 (eve)

Electrical Services

ALL ELECTRICAL work from a switch to a rewire. Insured, free quote 01902 575570 / 07958 627434.

ALL HOME ELECTRICS NAPIT registered. Fully insured. For a free quote call 07583 320318.

Gas Fitting

A BOILER BREAKDOWN, COOKER, FIRE, FITTED-SERVICED-REPAIRED
Landlord certs.
All areas covered.
J&E Heating.
Call John:
01902 562664 /07969 687832
Gas Safe Register

GAS SERVICES
• Boilers • Cookers
• Fires • Gas Checks
• Landlord Certificates
• Gas Leaks Traced
Fitted, Serviced and Repaired
Same Day Service
Free Quotes
DISCOUNTS FOR OAPs
Call: 01902 366855/ 07761 973975

READERS ARE ADVISED
To check that anyone carrying out any Gas work is Gas Safe Registered.
It is an offence under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to carry out gas work in the UK without being on the Gas Safe Register.

Fencing

CLASSIFIEDS FOR YOU!

"I am extremely happy with the service I get from my Express & Star Classified Sales Representatives and would recommend them to anyone! They have done a very professional job with my website so I get online enquiries as well now."
Michael- Portway Fencing

For great business results call
01902 319 191
ClassifiedAds
Brought to you by **Express & Star**

PORTWAY FENCING
SPECIAL OFFER
10 Bays of quality fencing, concrete posts, gravel boards **£695**
Heavy duty panels supplied & fitted.
0121 531 5250 / 07866 137 656
Mon - Fri 8am - 4.30pm
Sat 8am - 12noon
83 Portway Rd, W'bury
DELIVERY AVAILABLE
www.portwayfencing.co.uk

Handyman Services

YOUR LOCAL HANDYMAN
FREE QUOTES
All work guaranteed, Most trades covered, References available on request. No job too big or too small!
CALL MIKE: 07947 621047
0121 6010479

Electricians

Express & Star
ELECTRICIANS!
CLAIM YOUR FREE ADVERT
(T&Cs Apply)
Call Claire Smith: 01902 319661
claire.smith@expressandstar.co.uk

House Clearances

A ABSOLUTE BEST cash price paid for house clearances and bereavements. Also removals undertaken. **07852 172641 / 07710 360327**

Oven Cleaning

AAA OVEN CLEANING, Ovens, Hobs, Aga / Range / Micro / Extractors. 01902 689418 / 07910 921736

Painters/ Decorators

C I PAINTING & DECORATING Over 30 yrs experience.City & Guilds approved. Free Quotes. 07913 732756 or 01902 650716.

LOVE 2 WALLPAPER
Reliable & Friendly, Professional
Female Painters & Decorators
Attention to detail, competitive prices.
For the Perfect Finish with minimum hassle.
Plastering & Coving Work Undertaken
01384 287577 or 07812 484194
www.love-2-wallpaper.co.uk

CALL M & B DECORATORS
City & Guilds
No job too small
Free Quote
01902 494555

Plans Prepared

ADAM DESIGN, Building Plans. Drawn and submitted to council. Tel: 01902 620200 / 07841 654037. Email: adamdesign@sky.com

BUILDING Plans: Prepared/submitted. K J Bradley 01902 373248 07792 165767. www.plans4u.co.uk

Plastering

STEVES PLASTERING SERVICE Clean and Reliable, All Work Undertaken, All Areas. Call 0121 567 5919 / 07977 262943.

Plumbers

G M PLUMBING SERVICES Complete Bathrooms, Kitchens, Taps Showers,Blockages 07976 012468

Plumbing & Heating

Keiron Jones Plumbing & Heating
Full heating systems £2200
Boiler Changes £1100
Longer warranty available upon request, fires and surrounds also available.
For Free Quotes Call:
01902 403823 07811 855231

Removals

A2B REMOVALS Cheap and reliable removal service. Insured. 07817 842980 or 01902 744829.

CALL DEAN NOW: For all your Removal needs. 07429 453209/ 01902 830870 / 01384 940260.

KT HOUSE REMOVALS
12 years experience.
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL LOADS.
LOCAL OR DISTANCE. FULLY INSURED.
Free Quotes - Call Ric on:
07771 727119

KINGSWINFORD REMOVALS AND HOUSE CLEARANCES
We move anything.
Professional service,
45 years' experience,
DFS approved and we take the stress away.
Please call:
07966 281957

A CHEAPER REMOVAL
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL REMOVALS.
FULLY INSURED. 7 days.
01902 89 49 16
07807 77 30 35
FREE QUOTES
Student/OAP Discounts

Roofing

WH ROOFING CONTRACTORS
A backed bargain, slate, tile, flat, lead work, fascias and gutterwork, Free Quotes
Call: 01902 561434 or 07792 817062
E:whroofingcontractor@mail.com

COMPTON ROOFING
Tiled, Slate, Flat. New and Repairs
Ridge/Hip and Verges Re-bedded.
Chimney rebuilding/repointing.
Dry ridge and hip systems
07976 419915, 01902 448032

25% OFF SF ROOFING & GUTTERING
25 YEARS EXPERIENCE!
Flat, Main roofs, rubber or felt, repaired and replaced, all repointing, Guttering repaired and replaced.
BEAT ALL QUOTES GUARANTEED
Call Sean 01902 829158 8am to 8pm

ROOFING & GUTTERING
main, flat, felt, firestone rubber, fibreglass, all repointing, fascias, soffits, gutters. Free quotes. All quotes beaten. 8am-8pm.
01902 722447

MG ROOFING
Flat Roofing, Tiling, Roof Repairs, Fascias and Gutters.
Call 01902 238989 / 07580 465449.
www.mgroofingwestmidlands.co.uk

Rubbish Removal

LETS TALK RUBBISH No Skips Needed.Load/Remove any Waste, House Clearance. 07969 628382

Skip Hire

AN ABSOLUTE AFFORDABLE CASTLE SKIP HIRE
Mini, midi and large skips
GRAB HIRE AND MINI DIGGER AVAILABLE
01384 237577
01902 405745
07719 671845

BIG JOHN MOVES RUBBISH! No Skips, we load, fast friendly service, 25 Lister Rd, Dudley DY2 8JR, Est 40 years, 01384 232359.

Grinsells Skip Hire LTD
Mini, Midi, Maxi, Large Skips.
Monday to Friday.
Saturday half day.
0121 555 6060

AT M&M SKIPS
Fast, friendly service
All areas covered
All sizes
Same day service
Freephone
0800 619 0189 / 07904 915016

STONES SKIP HIRE 0121 557 1480 / 07886 721875 www.stoneysskiphire.co.uk

Tiling

BOBS HOME INTERIORS
Wall and floor Tiling
Bathrooms Fitted
FREE ESTIMATES
bob2granger@gmail.com
07480 141537
www.bobshomeinteriors.co.uk

Upholstery

CLASSIFIEDS FOR YOU!

"I am very happy with my Express & Star and Chronicles Advertising Campaign, also by using the local directory on expressandstar.com we are seeing benefits from visitors to our website."
Gary Downes - Bilston Upholstery

For great business results call
01902 319 191
ClassifiedAds
Brought to you by **Express & Star**

UPHOLSTERY SERVICES 3pcs/ springs/caravans/pubs/club/antiques. 01902 689844 / 07817 842980.

4 Pets & Animals

Equestrian Corner

ALL READERS are advised to check if Horses, Donkeys or Ponies have the required Passport information.

Guns & Dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

Pets Corner

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:
1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree.
Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

GREYHOUNDS MAKE WONDERFUL PETS
All neutered, innoculated and microchipped.
Call 01902 291080 or visit
www.gtwolverhampton.co.uk
Greyhound Trust Wolverhampton
@gtwolverhampton

ROSEDENE RESCUE CENTRE
1, Radley Road, Rushall, Walsall. WS4 1LN.
01922 627013.
Open Monday to Saturday
11am - 5pm.
Sundays - Bank Holidays
11am - 4pm.
Takes in relinquished dogs from owners, all areas (if they are vet checked/up to date with jabs.)
Donations of dog food, toys, bedding and vet bills always appreciated.

5 Business & Farming

Accountants

ACCOUNTANCY SERVICES for Small Business. Competitive Rates. Call 01902 882600

Commercial Premises

UNITS AND OFFICE SPACE to let in Oldbury, West Bromwich and Walsall. Easy Terms. Ashmore Properties 0121 520 5318.

Business Opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering into any obligations.

Commercial Premises Sale / Let

UNIT TO RENT, Bilston, approx 1000sqft plus yard. £650pcm. Ideal for motor trade. Flexible terms. 07970 464854. 01384 401598.

6 Property

Accommodation To Let

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments/contracts.

NOTICE TO READERS
It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

A SMART SINGLE ROOM in a Shared house, Netherton. £85 p.w. inc. bills. No DSS. 2 weeks deposit. **07940 116130.**

PENN COMMON two bed terraced cottage, lounge, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, garden at rear, unfurnished. £500 pcm. No DSS. Call 01902 700689.

Overseas Property

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

We buy houses
Sell your house fast
- avoid repossession
- behind on payments
- job relocation
- unwanted inheritance

What more - we buy in any condition
No estate agent fees
We pay all your legal fees
ACT NOW !
Contact us on :
07796 801219 / 07988 882090

7 Jobs

Building & Construction

EXPERIENCED WINDOW FITTER direct or sub-contract required for new build site work. CSCS card is required. Apply to Chapel Windows Ltd. on 01384 571315.

PAINTERS & DECORATORS Required Direct, Subcontract. CSCS, Time-Served, immediate start. Tel: 01562 751197 / 07836 557894 Email info@pvc-ltd.co.uk

Full Time General

Inshore Support

WE ARE NOW RECRUITING!

SUPPORT WORKERS £8.00ph
SENIOR SUPPORT WORKERS £9.00ph

FULL TIME & PART TIME POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Apply today:
www.inshoresupportltd.co.uk
or call Stephanie on **01384 421460**
for an application pack

Properties Wanted

Yes! HOMEBUYERS
THE EASY WAY TO SELL YOUR HOUSE

We Buy Houses For Cash

Free Valuation? Yes! No Fees? Yes! Any Location? Yes!
Fast Sale? Yes! Any House? Yes! Any Condition? Yes!

Get your FREE, instant cash offer today!

The Property Ombudsman
Call 01384 913 543
or text "Cash" to 66777
yeshomebuyers.com

FreeAds

IT'S FREE
IT'S EASY

*Advertise any item ***FREE*** up to the value of ***£250*** go to:
bookanad.expressandstar.co.uk

Simply click the FreeAds icon FreeAds

***Private advertisers only, no guns, pets, or livestock.**
Free adverts are published within 7 days of receipt, in-paper and online and are limited to 3 lines maximum.

Employment Wanted

EXPERIENCED BRICK LAYER requires any type of brick work. 07341 021774.

Nursing & Carers

CARE ASSISTANTS for Sedgley Care Home. Must have NVQ 2. Call Manager on 07432 619221.

8 Motoring

Cars Over £1500

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

FORD MONDEO ZETEC TDCI
5-dr, 2012, (62), two owners, fsh, silver, sat nav, climate, parking sensors, stereo / CD etc., newly fitted cam kit, MoT December, high miles but immaculate throughout,
£3,500.
07970 705466.

PRESTIGE
MERCEDES E350 CDi SE AUTO COUPE
2009, panoramic glass sunroof, comand sat nav, memory package, 17ins alloys, 6 disc CD/ DVD changer, 130k with FSH,
Engine needs attention.
Hence price £4,950 ono.
07836 204450 / deolsuk@hotmail.co.uk

MINI COOPER
2005, 63,600 miles, silver, part leather interior, panoramic electric roof, MoT November 2018, 6 disc CD.
£1,850 ono.
07572 554829.

PEUGEOT 107
63 reg.
15,000 miles.
Three door.
MoT September 2018.
£2,895 ono.
07778 089001.

EXCELLENT CONDITION
VAUXHALL INSIGNIA 2.0CDTi 16V SRi
5 door. Auto.
Silver. 2012.
£4,995
01902 895481.

Cars Under £1500

DIESEL
FIAT DOBLO CARGO 1.9
Diesel, 6 door, 2001, fsh, full MoT, 65,000 miles,
JVC stereo system, very good condition for year.
one owner from new,
£950 o.n.o.
07958 449215

BARGAIN
FORD FOCUS 1.8 DIESEL
Silver, 2005, 116k miles, 10 months MoT, serviced,
very reliable, good condition inside and out.
£700 ono.
07979 472572.

HONDA ACCORD 1.8 SE SALOON
Low mileage.
One owner.
01384 278265.

GOOD RUNNER
PEUGEOT 307 2.0 TURBO
Silver.
04 plate.
61,000 miles.
Part leather interior.
Fairly good condition.
Very economical.
£950 ono.
07540 434562.

IDEAL FIRST CAR
SUZUKI IGNIS
06 plate, 62,000 miles, two owners from new, MoT end July, very reliable.
£1,000 ono.
07840 872955

MUST BE SEEN
VAUXHALL ZAFRIA 1.9CDTi Design Model
55 reg, 107,000 miles only, 150bhp, electric windows, electric mirrors, half leather, alloys, black, been re mapped,
Nine months MoT, well looked after, very clean, lots of history,
£1,450.
07544 370350

Classic Cars

WANTED, CLASSIC Car. Private cash buyer. Any condition, anything considered.
01630 652993 or 07773 462797.

Commercial Vehicles

FORD TRANSIT 115 T350 59 reg., white, tacho fitted, 133K miles, very clean £3,250 ono. 07836 568903.

Driving Tuition

AMAZING OFFER 5 lessons £40, 10 lessons £80. £20 an hour there after. Call now 07958 051263.

Scrap Vehicles

OUR ADVERTISERS are reminded that it is an offence under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 to buy scrap cars/metal for cash.

MCB
TOP PRICES PAID FOR ALL SCRAP CARS, VANS, BIKES, CLASSICS
Tel: 01902 408176
1000's of parts available at all times
MONMORE RD. WV1 2TZ

ABC AUTO SALVAGE WANTED URGENT
Scrap & MOT Failures Best Prices Paid ELV Registered Spares Always Available
0121 557 0800 or 0121 557 0400.
Oldbury Area.

A BETTER PRICE
for scrap or damaged cars and commercials. Spares for sale.
NINE LOCKS VEHICLE DISMANTLERS LTD
Brierley Hill 01384 76566 or 70553. Evenings 75397. DY5 3JZ.

spares & accessories

Clutches/Brakes/ Gearboxes

A CLUTCH CHANGE MOBILE
Renault Scenic, Vauxhall Zafira, Renault Clio, Ford Focus & KA and MANY MORE!!
Ring for quotes
30 yrs experience
ALL AREAS COVERED
Call Bob
01384 251328
07972 169554
anytime

Spares/Parts

WINTER SALE Thule Roof Bars and Spares. Wolves Hire 01902 746723 WV6 0LE

Vehicles Wanted

CROWN MOTORS guarantee best price for your unwanted cars/vans. 07903 549849, buyer will call.

9 Local Information

Public Notices

LEGAL / PUBLIC NOTICES
For convenience youmay fax any advertising requirements to
Marie Hogg on 01902 713146
or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk
(remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

DOROTHY MAY CARPENTER (Deceased)
Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 87 Old Park Road Dudley West Midlands DY1 3NE, who died on 25/09/2017, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned on or before 20/03/2018, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.
CO-OP LEGAL SERVICES LIMITED
Aztec 650 Aztec West
Almondsbury Bristol BS32 4SD
(Ref:LDJ/4136496P/Carpenter) T519785

MARY MAUREEN (also known as MAUREEN MARY) WATSON (Deceased)
Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 7 Stockton Court Mason Street Coseley Bilston WV14 9SY, who died on 29/09/2005, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned Solicitors on or before 16/03/2018, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.
THURSFIELDS SOLICITORS
3A Dudley Street Sedgley Dudley
West Midlands DY3 1SA T519708

10 Personals

General

WOULD MRS L AND MR P CAMPBELL
Who live in Wolverhampton. Please contact Mr. I Bates, who lives in South Shields, as he has lost your postal address and telephone number.
Please write regarding this to.
Box Number P21039 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

Personal

ATTRACTIVE lonely Female seeking broadminded males within a 20 mile radius. 01902 489 181.

FAMILY HISTORY REUNION
A Frost, maiden name A Ellis now residing in Australia is arranging a Family reunion for Teece, Worrall and Ellis for Family history reunion.
Please contact A Frost or S. Harris.
Box Number P21050 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

HAPPY NEW YEAR LADIES
Modern retired gent, 60's, medium build, loyal, honest, no ties, driver, GSOH, WLTM similar slim to medium lady, to make 2018 a really good year.
Stourbridge, Dudley and surrounding areas.
All replies answered.
Thank you.
Box Number P21046 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

NICE LADY
Outgoing and homely with various interests, would like to meet gent 60 plus who is kind and genuine.
Box Number P21040 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

PHIL, 60 YEAR OLD MALE
5ft 10". Slim.
Own house and car.
From Wolves.
Looking for Female, age between 30-60, for Friendship, maybe more.
Box Number P21042 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

Local Specialists

Blinds & Curtains

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Livermore won't face action over fan fracas

ALBION midfielder Jake Livermore will not face action from the FA after confronting a West Ham supporter who allegedly taunted him over the death of his infant son.

The 28-year-old England international has been reminded of his responsibility not to react to fans whatever the circumstances – though mainly for his own safety and that of innocent spectators.

Livermore became involved in an angry exchange with a supporter sitting just behind the away team's dugout at the London Stadium, after being substituted in the second half of the Baggies 2-1 loss to the Hammers on January 2.

Albion have claimed Livermore was provoked by a remark related to the death of his infant son, Jake Junior, in 2014.

West Ham have identified the fan and are currently investigating the matter.Having asked both clubs for their observations on the incident, the FA is understood to be happy with West Ham's handling of the case.

Right royal rumble as Duggan checks in

THE first-ever winner of the WWE Royal Rumble will be in the Black Country tomorrow night (Friday) ahead of the event's 30th anniversary.

American wrestling superstar 'Hacksaw' Jim Duggan will be in action at Darlaston Town Hall. He makes the trip across the pond to take top billing on a Pro Wrestling Live card staged by local promoter Matt Powell at the Victoria Road venue.

Duggan, from Glen Falls, New York, won the maiden Royal Rumble in 1988. He went on to become a WWE Hall of Famer and is still signed to the company on a Legends contract. The 63-year-old will dust off his wrestling boots, trusty 2 x 4 plank of wood and use his battle cries of 'Hooo' and 'USA' in the Black Country ring.

Tickets are available, with general admission £6.50, VIP ringside passes £12, a family of four, two adults and two children £22.

For more information, call 07404 279 880. Payment can be made on the doors, which open at 6.30pm for a 7.30pm start.

EFL Trophy on way to Wolverhampton

THE EFL Championship trophy that Wolves are currently on course to regain will be on show at a city pub next weekend.

Wolves stand top of the pile in the Championship and are on course to win the re-branded title for a second time, the last eight years ago in 2009.

Fans have the chance to see the trophy early when it arrives at the George Wallis, Victoria Street, on Saturday January 27.

Competition sponsors Sky Bet are taking the trophy on a whistle-stop tour and will be in the pub's upstairs function room from 1-3pm.

Selfies and photographs with the silverware can be taken as a memento. Tables can be pre-booked, but no tickets are required and admission is free. Donations are welcome for a charity of the George Wallis' choice.

Pub mascot George the Wolf will be on hand to entertain visitors on an afternoon where Wolves are scheduled to play away.

There will be a raffle for football-themed prizes and the day's FA Cup games will be shown across the venue. Contact the pub on 01902 426892.

RIP Big Cyrille – football legend and a gentleman

Regis fires home for Albion against Manchester United at Old Trafford

Regis was also a popular player at Villa and Wolves

Baggies so-called Three Degrees with the 70s musical group

TRIBUTES have continued to pour in from fans all over the world following the death of football legend Cyrille Regis.

The 59-year-old passed away on Sunday night of a heart attack.

Born on February 9, 1958, to Robert and Mathilde Regis in French Guiana, his father moved to Britain, with Regis and the rest of his family following a year later. They initially pitched up in the Portobello Road area before later moving to Stonebridge.

A talented sportsman, Regis impressed in football, cricket and athletics at Cardinal Hinsley School (Harlesden) and was called up to the Borough of Brent Boys' football team. He was offered a trial by Chelsea, but was unable to attend due to injury.

Regis trained as an electrician – a trade he continued in until becoming a professional footballer – and played Sunday League football for Ryder Brent Valley and Oxford & Kilburn Boys.

He began to bang in the goals following a move to London amateur club Molesey in 1975/76 and when he repeated the feat at Hayes the following season, Albion came calling.

Important

The 19-year-old was spotted by Baggies chief scout Ronnie Allen and a deal was reached to buy Regis for £5,000 in May 1977, with another £5,000 once he reached 20 appearances. Laurie Cunningham had joined two months earlier, Brendon Batson would sign soon after – they would become three of the most important figures in the club's history and christened The Three Degrees by boss Ron Atkinson.

Allen took over from Johnny Giles as manager and handed the striker his debut in a League Cup tie on August 31, 1977 against Rotherham – and Regis scored twice in a 4-0 win. Three days later, he was on the scoresheet in a 2-1 league victory over Middlesbrough. Regis ended that first campaign with 10 goals in 34 league games – and six more in the FA Cup as Albion finished sixth and reached the semi-final, with Atkinson having replaced Allen in January 1978. In 1978/79 Albion finished third in the First Division and reached the quarter-finals of the Uefa Cup.

SPORTING FEATURE

By Matt Wilson

"Losing him has turned my whole world upside down. It is a void that will never be filled."

After 13 goals in 39 league appearances Regis was voted PFA Young Footballer of the Year. The Three Degrees were broken up ahead of the 1979/80 season with Cunningham sold to Real Madrid. With Regis sidelined early on, he would only net eight league goals. Albion finished 10th and exited the cups early.

Fortunes improved in 1980/81 as Regis bagged 14 times in 38 league matches, lifting the Baggies to fourth and a return to the Uefa Cup. Regis' tally of 17 goals in 37 league matches was his best at Albion and he finished second in the Footballer of the Year vote behind Tottenham's Steve Perryman

He also won the first of five England caps in a 4-0 win over Northern Ireland at Wembley, becoming the third black player to be capped by England after Viv Anderson and Cunningham.

Regis left The Hawthorns in 1984 with 112 goals in 302 games. His eight seasons in Baggies colours were followed by a further seven down the road at Coventry City, where he won the FA Cup in 1987.

Having netted 47 goals in 238 games for Coventry, Regis was reunited with Atkinson at Villa in 1991 – becoming Big Ron's first signing at Villa Park.

He netted on his debut again in a 3-2 success over Sheffield Wednesday and found the net 11 times that season as Villa finished seventh and reached the sixth round of the FA Cup. His minutes were limited the following season – particularly following the £2.3million arrival of Dean Saunders – and his only goal of the campaign would arrive in a 2-1 victory over Nottingham Forest in December 1992. With his career winding down, he crossed the divide for the old gold and black of Wolves, later dropping through the divisions to play for Wycombe Wanderers and Chester City in Division Three before finally calling time in 1996. After his playing career ended Regis also awarded an honorary fellowship by the University of Wolverhampton in 2001 before becoming a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 2008.

As well as working in a range of coaching roles, he became an accredited football agent – including for his nephew Jason Roberts – and continued charity work with wife Julia, including for WaterAid. His legacy continues to inspire footballers of all races today.

Regis leaves behind widow Julia, two children and three grandchilen. In a statement released by Albion, Julia Regis described the 59-year-old legend as her 'soulmate', a 'beautiful man' and 'a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle'.

Respected

She said: "Losing him has turned my whole world upside down. It is a void that will never be filled. He was a role model for so many because he always treated everyone he met with kindness and respect."

Albion chairman John Williams said: "Everyone will have their precious memories of him as a family man, as a crusader against bigotry – which can never be under-estimated – and as a man who threw considerable energy into a series of worthy causes.

"But for me, I will never forget Cyrille the footballer – a wonderful, wonderful player who had everything and who defenders of the time would have hated facing."

Geoff Snape, secretary of West Brom's Former Players Association said: "A legend, a word that is sometimes used too frivolously but in the case of Big C it was a word that summed him up, a really nice guy, respected by his colleagues."

Tearful Ally Robertson, a former team-mate and close friend, said: "I'm heartbroken. Cyrille is a true great. He was the ultimate gentleman. I cannot believe he has gone."

Steve Bull joined in the tributes, describing his former Wolves team-mate as "a man and a player I looked up to".

Sport

RIP Big Cyrille – tributes paid to football legend

Page 43

Running men look destined for relegation

THE writing appears to be on the wall for the men from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club after race three of four in the Birmingham & District Cross Country League at Cofton Park on Saturday.

Already bottom of Division 2 they were hit with injury and illness meaning only nine athletes were able to start the race over three sweeping, rolling, two-mile laps of south Birmingham parkland. Steve Holdcroft was first back for the club in a very impressive 38th place in 37.08, Stuart Perkins was 63rd in 38.10, Darran Bishop finished in 129th in 40.43, Dave Norman was 158th in 42.03, Mark Homer was 193rd in 43.33 and Pete Hood competed the A team scorers in 213th in 45.02. Sergei Ljubovnikov finished in 47.12 to take 234th place, Dave Hickman was 236th in 47.16 and Andy Weaver was 256th in 49.29.

With one race remaining the male section of the blue hoops are rooted at the bottom of the table and look destined to return to the Third Division.

The female section were also at Cofton Park covering two laps of the same course and four miles in total in the Second Division of the Midland Women's League. Helen Tromans was first back in 44th place, Jacqui Elson-Whittaker was 107th in 36.27, Jane Campbell was 126th in 38.25, Jan Burbie, Kimberley Ball and Susan Barley went round together finishing in 153rd in 42.03, 154th in 42.23 and 156th in 42.28 respectively, Donna Proffitt was 166th in 43.47 and Farah Hunter-Coley was 180th in 46.18.

Twenty four hours later, former DK member Matt Biggs won the rescheduled Sneyd Christmas Pudding 10, a 10-mile two-lap race where all finishers are presented with a festive pudding. Biggs, now with Birchfield Harriers, goes from strength to strength in the all black of the Birmingham club, crossing the line in 55:43.

Ex-Baggie and old Glassboys coach dies

FORMER Albion player Archie Styles – a stalwart of the Baggies' Former Players Association – has died at the age of 78.

Styles, who was born in Smethwick on October 29, 1939, joined Albion from Smethwick Boys in 1956.

He went on to make one first-team appearance before leaving for Wrexham in 1960 and played for several non-league clubs – including Stourbridge, where he was also a coach.

A statement on the Former Players Association website read: "He said that perhaps the most enjoyable time both socially and in football terms was the times he played for the All Stars Charity side alongside Stan Jones, Bobby Hope and many more."

Styles leaves son Dean, daughter Kerry, grandchildren Tom, Shannon, Georgia, Laura and Kyle, plus four great grandchildren.

Hopes shattered by sub's late goal

Stourbridge go 2-1 up against Billercay

Billericay Town 3 Stourbridge 2

A GOAL in injury time by substitute Billy Bricknell shattered the Glassboys' hopes of reaching the last 16 of the FA Trophy.

The big-spending Essex outfit had most of the first half play and led 1-0 through top scorer Jake Robinson.

Leon Broadhurst headed home a 47th minute equaliser and three minutes later, the travelling Stourbridge fans were in ecstasy when Tom Tonks' cross was headed in by Stuart Pierpoint to seemingly turn the game round.

But Ricky Modeste equalised for Billericay on 67 minutes and in injury time Stourbridge goalkeeper Matt Gould failed to get anything on a Sam Feering corner and Bricknell netted from close range.

Stourbridge did progress to the quarter-finals of the Birmingham Senior Cup on Monday night, however, after overcoming a youthful Wolves side 2-1 at Amblecote.

Aaron Forde and Jack Duggan scored for Stourbridge with Jose Nuno Xavier pulling one back before Wolves' sub Jordan Allen missed an injury time spot-kick that could have forced a penalty shoot-out.

A minutes' silence was held for Cyrille Regis, who played for Wolves and was also a close friend of Glassboys boss Gary Hackett.

DK EDGE IT TO CLAIM BONUS

DK 25 Bromsgrove 23

IT may have been a grey afternoon at Heathbrook, but the rugby was sparkling.

DK and Bromsgrove went toe-to-toe and the hosts just edged it for a bonus point win.

Within the first 10 minutes both sides had crossed the try line, first DK through centre Sam Vaughan. But from the kick-off Jack Barwick replied and the conversion put Bromsgrove in front.

The next points came from a Bromsgrove penalty by Richard Mahony and the visitors increased their lead through centre Edward Spalding. DK needed to score the next points to keep in the game, and Luke Greenwood obliged.

DK managed to draw level at half-time. Jordan Brookes took a quick penalty and ran at an angle to give Stef Shillingford an excellent running line through the defence after a short pop pass, straight in for the try. Vaughan missed the conversion, so it was 15-15 at the interval.

Range

DK took an early lead in second half with a Vaughan penalty, though within a short period Bromsgrove had been awarded two penalties within range and one was kicked to level again.

Into the final quarter and the visitors went in front again with another Spalding try, but the conversion, from out wide, missed the target.

With about 15 minutes left with the time to be added on, DK went for it, knowing a try would give them the bonus point and level the scores.

Their moment came when Pete Griffiths who had an excellent game at number 8, broke the Bromsgrove line deep in their 22. He was tackled but was able to slip the ball to Brookes who drew the defence to his left and slipped the ball back into Greenwood. He was able explode through the gap that Brookes had made for him to cross the line and Vaughan despatched the conversion.

DK are at Burton's Peel Croft ground in a top of the table clash on Saturday.

Jordan Brookes takes a quick penalty to set DK on the attack against Bromsgrove

Champions beaten in campaign opener

THE hopeful wielding of rusty bats in the general direction of a round red object was again heard at Kinver High Sports Hall as the Northern division of the WCB Indoor Cricket League began the 2018 campaign.

A full complement of clubs are taking part this year and the first of two low-scoring matches saw the county champions Hagley lose their first game in more than a year, by 18 runs to Enville. Chasing the Enville total of 93-3, Hagley fell short at just 75-5.

In the other game, Oldswinford skittled out Pedmore for just 69 and then racked up the winning total for the loss of two wickets, helped by the bowling of 25 wides from the Pedmore attack.

Pedmore's innings got off to a disastrous start, losing three wickets in the same number of overs for just 22.

Oldswinford needed four runs in the last over and just scraped home on the last ball.

Third home defeat in a row for Yeltz

Halesowen Town 0 Nantwich Town 1

HALESOWEN slumped to a third successive home defeat with a laboured performance after Nantwich's Joe Mwasile hit an early winner.

Exodus Geohaghon's 15th minute long throw-in was almost touched in by Spencer Weir-Daley on his Halesowen debut. But the Dabbers broke straight up field with a long clearance down the middle and the Yeltz were caught standing as Mwasile outpaced the central defence to hammer past Dan Platt in the 16th minute.

Halesowen created little in the first half after that, although Jack Kelly hit a 22nd minute free-kick straight at visiting on-loan Blackpool goalkeeper Myles Boney.

Late in the first half Mwasile strolled straight through the middle again but his 20 yard shot was parried by Platt with David Forbes unable to keep the rebound down.

At the start of the second period Enock Ekongo drove past the Nantwich post from 25 yards and Kevin Monteiro volleyed wide. Home goalkeeper Platt saved a couple of attempts from Matt Bell and Harry Clayton fired over after a neat Nantwich move.

Nantwich were happy to play out the game without too much trouble, although Kelly's 86th minute free-kick was turned away and the resulting corner was scrambled clear. Platt saved from Nantwich substitute Stephen Jones in the final minute of added time.

Kick-off for new five-a-side league

A NEW five-a-side football league is to kick off in Stourbridge – after research showed playing the sport can help middle aged men avoid heart attacks.

A study conducted in part by Exeter University found men who played football saw their blood pressure levels drop, were at 90 per cent of their heart's maximum rate for longer and increased their resting heart rate. The competition starts at Crystal Leisure Centre on Sunday. It is open to over-16s but 5aside.co.uk wants to encourage others who may have hung up their boots years ago.

Visit https://www.5aside.co.uk/league/crystal-leisure-centre/stourbridge-sunday

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